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THE

WORKS

Of the Most Reverend

Dr JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. IX.

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SERMON CCIV.

Of the form, and the power of godlineſs.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE Apoſtle in theſe words diſtinguiſhes two things in religion, which do not, but ought always to go together, *viz.* the ſhew and pretence of religion, and the life and power of it. He condemns neither, but blames the ſeparating of them. The latter indeed cannot be without the firſt; for where-ever religion really is, there will be ſome appearance of it: but the former may be, and often is, without the latter. Men may make a great ſhew of religion, and yet be very deſtitute of the power of it. And ſuch were thoſe perſons the Apoſtle deſcribes here in the text; they were guilty of the greateſt faults and vices in their lives, but thought to cloke all theſe by an outward ſhew and appearance of godlineſs: *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.*

The word μόρφωσις, which is here tranſlated *form*, ſignifies the ſhew or image of a thing, which is dead and ineffectual, in oppoſition to the reality and life, which is quick and powerful. And, I think, this word is but once more uſed in the New Teſtament, and much in the ſame ſenſe, *viz.* for an empty and ineffectual knowledge of religion, without the practice of it, Rom. ii. 17. 20. 21. The Apoſtle there ſpeaks of ſome Phariſaical Jews, who gloried in their knowledge of the law, but violated it in their practice. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and reſteſt in the law, and haſt the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf? Thou that preacheſt, a man ſhould not ſteal, doſt thou ſteal?*

So that *a form of godlineſs* ſignifies an empty ſhew and profeſſion of religion, without the real effects of it.

And they who are deſtitute of theſe, are ſaid to *deny the power of religion.* It is uſual in ſeveral languages to draw metaphors from words to actions; and men are ſaid to contradict or deny any thing, when they do contrary to what they pretend; and ſo this phraſe is elſewhere uſed, Tit. i. 10. *They profeſs to know God, but in their works they deny him.* 1 Tim. v. 8. *If any man provide not for his own, eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith.* The Apoſtle does not mean that ſuch an one denies the faith by an expreſs declaration in words, but by actions ſo contradictory to the Chriſtian faith, as an infidel would hardly do: *He hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.*

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe four things.

Firſt, Shew wherein *a form of godlineſs* conſiſts.

Secondly, Wherein the *power of it lies.*

Thirdly, Give ſome marks and characters whereby we may know when theſe are ſeparated, when *the form of godlineſs* is deſtitute of *the power.*

Fourthly, Shew that a mere *form of godlineſs,* without *the power of it,* is inſignificant to all the great ends and purpoſes of religion.

Firſt, To ſhew wherein *a form of godlineſs* doth conſiſt. In general, it conſiſts in an external ſhew and profeſſion of religion, or of any eminent part of it, or of that which is reputed to be ſo; and a form of religion is more or leſs complete, according to the extent of it. Some pitch upon one part of religion, and ſet themſelves chiefly to make a ſhew of that; others take in more parts of it, and endeavour to expreſs and counterfeit them; ſo that the forms of religion are various and different, and not to be reduced to any fixed and conſtant ſtandard; but they commonly appear in ſome one or more of theſe ſhapes.

I. An external devotion.

II. An orthodox profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith.

III. Enthuſiaſm, and pretence to inſpiration.

IV. A great external ſhew of mortification.

V. An

V. An imperfect repentance, and partial reformation.

VI. The appearance and ostentation of some particular grace and virtue.

VII. A great zeal for some party, or opinions, or circumstances of religion.

VIII. Silliness and freakishness, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concernments of human life.

IX. Much noise and talk about religion.

These are the several forms of religion which men are wont to assume. Not that these do always go singly; but sometimes men put on one, sometimes more of them, as may best serve their several turns and interests. Nor would I be understood to condemn all these; for several of these particulars which I have mentioned are good in themselves, and necessary parts of religion; but being destitute of other things, wherein the life of religion doth consist, they are but *a form of godliness*.

I. External devotion. This is the most common form of religion, and easiest to be assumed, and therefore it is that so many take it up. And this is good in itself, and a necessary part of religion: but if there be no more than this, it is a mere image and picture of religion, abominable to God, and fulsome and odious to discerning men.

Now, this external devotion shews itself more especially these two ways.

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion.

2. In a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing these.

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving of the blessed sacrament. These are not the life of religion, the great end and design of it, but the means and instruments which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of holiness and virtue in us. Many exercise themselves in these with great constancy and devotion, pray to God, and read the Bible frequently, go to church duly, and hear God's word attentively, and receive the

ſacrament reverently, and behave themſelves devoutly in all parts of public worſhip; and yet all this may be but a mere form, and certainly is no more, where the great end of all this is neglected, and men do not ſincerely endeavour to do what God's word directs them to, and what they daily pray to God to enable them to do.

For all theſe means are in order to ſome farther effect and deſign. We read and hear the word of God, that we may know his will, and that we may do it; that, by the precepts and counſels of the holy ſcriptures, we may learn and underſtand our duty; and, by the motives and arguments which are there offered to us, we may effectually be perſuaded to the practice of it. We pray to God, not only for the forgiveneſs of our ſins, but for his grace and aſſiſtance, to enable us to mortify and ſubdue them, and to proceed in all virtue and godlineſs of living. We receive the ſacrament, to inflame our love to God and our bleſſed Saviour, to excite in us a greater hatred of ſin, and to confirm us in the purpoſe and reſolution of well-doing. Theſe are the great ends for which God hath appointed all theſe helps and means; and if theſe ends be not obtained, in vain do we worſhip God, all our religion is but mere ſhew and pageantry. We are but like the people God himſelf deſcribes, Iſ. xxix. 13. *This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* And like thoſe, Ezek. xxxiii. 30. 31. 32. who *ſpake one to another, every one to his brother, ſaying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they ſit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetouſneſs. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely ſong, of one that hath a pleaſant voice, and can play well on an inſtrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.* This is not to worſhip God, but impudently to affront him; and if we take this for religion, we put the groſſeſt cheat imaginable upon ourſelves. Hear how God challenges the people of Iſrael upon this account, Jer. vii. 2. 3. 4. &c. *Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in*

in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. This is the great end of all religious worship and devotion, the reformation of our lives and actions; and if it have not this effect, it is a cheat. *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods, whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?* What greater impudence can there be, than to worship God devoutly, and to live wickedly? This is to declare that we mock God under a pretence of serving him; or else that we believe that God, whom we worship, allows these abominations, and is pleased with them.

2. Others make this form of external devotion yet more complete, by a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing the duties of religion. They are very punctual and exact in all their carriage and gestures, as if they minded nothing else but the outward part of religion.

Not but that great humility and reverence does very well become men in their addresses to God; but then we must be sure, that this external reverence be a signification of the inward and real devotion of our minds. For if it be separated from this, it is not devotion, but superstition; it is not to *worship God in spirit and in truth*, but in bodily shew and appearance only; not to honour the divine majesty, but to fawn upon him, and flatter him. And where men are very intent upon these things, and endeavour to outstrip o-

ther people in voluntary expreſſions of outward devotion, it too often happens that ſuch perſons are deſtitute of the ſubſtance and reality of religion. They are like the formal complimenting ſort of people in civil converſation, who commonly have very little in them, and, notwithſtanding all their ſmooth outſide and appearance, they have neither that ſolidity nor ſincerity which is in many a plain ordinary man.

II. An orthodox profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith. This is another form of religion, which the more knowing and inquiſitive ſort of men are apt to take up and reſt in. And this is that which, in the Jewiſh religion, the Apoſtle calls *a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.*

And this is good as far as it goes. But then it muſt not reſt only in the brain, but deſcend from thence upon the heart and life: otherwiſe a man may have this *form of godlineſs,* and yet be a *denier of the power of it.* St Paul puts this very caſe, that a man may have the theory and knowledge of religion, and yet if it do not produce the fruits of a good life, it is nothing worth: 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.* And the reaſon is plain, becauſe the knowledge of religion is only in order to the practice of it; and an article or propoſition of faith is an idle thing, if it do not produce ſuch actions as the belief of ſuch a propoſition doth require.

There are many perſons in the world very ſolicitous about an orthodox belief, and mightily concerned to know what the ſcriptures, but eſpecially what the councils and fathers, have declared in ſuch a matter; and they are nice and ſcrupulous in theſe things, even to the utmoſt punctilios, and will, with a moſt unchriſtian paſſion, contend for the Chriſtian faith: and yet perhaps all this while they can allow themſelves in plain ſins, and in the practice of ſuch things as are in ſcripture as clearly forbidden to be done, as any thing is there commanded to be believed. Whereas religion does not conſiſt ſo much in nicety and ſubtilty of belief, as in integrity and innocency of life; and the

trueſt

truest and most orthodox persuasion in matters of religion, is but a mere form and image, if it be not accompanied with an answerable practice; yea, like the image presented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, *whose head was of fine gold, but the legs and feet were iron and clay.*

Not but that a right belief is of great concernment in religion; but then this belief must be prosecuted into the proper and genuine consequences of it, upon our lives: if it be not, it is unhappy for men that they believe so well, when they live so ill. The devils have a right faith, St James tells us, *they believe and tremble.* And indeed none have so much reason to tremble, as those who believe the principles of religion, and yet are conscious to themselves that they live contrary to them; because of all persons in the world they are the most inexcusable.

III. Another form of religion which many take upon them, is enthusiasm, and pretence to inspiration And this is a very glorious form, which is apt to dazzle and amuse the ignorant, because they know not what to make of it. It seems to be something strange and extraordinary, and yet it is nothing but what every man that has confidence enough may pretend to.

There is no Christian doubts but that the Spirit of God hath heretofore inspired men in an extraordinary manner, and that he may do so again when he pleases: but since the great and standing revelation of the gospel, we have reason not to be rash in giving heed to such pretences. If those who pretend to inspiration declare nothing but what is revealed in the gospel already, their inspiration is needless; if they declare any thing contrary thereto, we are sufficiently cautioned against them; if any thing besides the revelation of the gospel, but not contrary to it, then we are to expect what evidence they bring for their inspiration. For God does not inspire men for their own sakes, but for the sake of others; and another man's inspiration is nothing to me, unless he can satisfy me that he is inspired. For either I must believe every one that pretends to inspiration, or those only that can make good their pretence. Not every one, for then I yield up myself to the mercy of every confident man, to lead

me

me into what deluſions he pleaſes. If I believe only thoſe who are able to make good this pretence, then am I in no great danger; for nothing leſs than a miracle can give me reaſonable aſſurance of another man's inſpiration; and, I think, few or none of our modern enthuſiaſts have ſo much as pretended to miracles. So that this form of religion is calculated only to impoſe upon the ignorant, but ſignifies little among the ſteady and conſiderate ſort of people.

Nay, if this pretence were real, yet it may be no more than a form of religion. For the Apoſtle ſuppoſes that men may *have the gift of prophecy*, and yet *want charity, without which they are nothing*. And our Saviour tells us, that many ſhall plead at the day of judgment, *Have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?* And yet theſe very perſons, for all this, may be *workers of iniquity*, and ſuch as our Lord will bid to *depart from him*.

IV. A great external ſhew of mortification.

This the Phariſees of old did much applaud themſelves in; they faſted twice a-week. And this is ſtill a great part of the religion of many in the Romiſh church; they impoſe ſtrict penalties and corporal ſeverities upon themſelves; abſtain from ſeveral ſorts of meats and drinks, watch and afflict their bodies with ſeveral ſorts of rigours: whereas one ſevere reſolution of a good life, well proſecuted, is a thouſand times better than all this.

For experience ſhews us, that men may be very ſevere to their bodies, and yet favourable to their luſts. The Phariſees indeed faſted often, but they were ravenous in another kind, *they devoured widows houſes*. It is poſſible that men may kill themſelves by corporal auſterities, and yet never mortify one luſt; they may ſubmit to a thouſand penances, and yet never truly repent of one ſin; they may turn pilgrims, and go as far as Jeruſalem to viſit our Saviour's ſepulchre, and yet never *know the power of his death*.

Faſting may be a good inſtrument of religion, if it be diſcreetly uſed; and as it may be uſed, there may be no religion in it. But as for thoſe other kinds of ſeverities, they are abſurd and ſuperſtitious, and taken up

up upon a great miſtake of the nature of God; as if he were never well pleaſed, but when we do ſomething very diſpleaſing to ourſelves; as if he were extremely delighted in the miſery and torment of his creatures; and to be cruel and unmerciful to ourſelves, were the only way to move his compaſſion towards us.

Theſe are barbarous and heatheniſh conceits of God; and the abſurd practices grounded upon them are no where recommended to us in ſcripture, nor have any example there, but only in Baal's prieſts, who lanced and cut themſelves, believing that to be a good way to incline their gods to hear them. Theſe are voluntary ſuperſtitions, which God hath required at no man's hands. And no wiſe man can doubt, but that he that really mortifies his luſts, and ſubdues his paſſions, may be a good man, though he never whipped himſelf in all his life; and that he that lives ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly, may juſtly be accounted religious, without turning vagrant, and rambling idly up and down the world. Theſe are ſuch forms of religion as can have no eſteem and reputation, but in a very ſuperſtitious church and age.

V. An imperfect repentance, and partial reformation.

By an imperfect repentance, I mean a trouble and ſorrow for ſin, without the forſaking of it, and the amendment of our lives; or when, if men do reform in ſome things, they continue in the love and practice of other ſins. This is not true repentance; for he that hath truly repented, is heartily troubled for all his offences againſt God, and reſolved not to commit the like again; but he that retains any luſt, and allows himſelf in the practice of it, is not troubled that he hath offended God, but hath left his ſins for ſome other reaſon. For whatever arguments and conſiderations, reflecting God, will move a man to quit any one luſt, ought, upon the ſame account, to prevail with him to abandon all. So that whatever trouble and ſorrow a man may pretend for his ſins, there is no ſurer ſign of an inſincere repentance, than if, after this, he continue in the habitual practice of any known ſin.

VI. The appearance and oſtentation of ſome particular grace and virtue.

A man may be moved by the inclination of his nature, or upon ſome intereſt and deſign, to the practice of ſome particular virtue. Some are tender and compaſſionate in their nature, and that excites them to charity; others of quiet and eaſy diſpoſitions, and that makes them patient, and meek, and peaceable; others aſſume one or more virtuous qualities, out of vain-glory, or to ſerve ſome other intereſt. The Phariſees were much in giving alms, becauſe this is a piece of religion univerſally applauded, and well ſpoken of; and therefore though they omitted many other neceſſary parts of religion, yet they were ſo cunning that they would not be defective in this; not out of regard to God, but themſelves and their own reputation. For, as our Saviour obſerves, they did their alms with ſuch circumſtances of vain-glory, as quite blaſted the glory of them. *They cauſed a trumpet to be ſounded before them in the ſynagogues, and in the ſtreets, that they might be ſeen of men*, and have glory of them.

Now, though the exerciſe of every grace and virtue be materially a ſubſtantial part of religion, yet the practice of one virtue, with the neglect of others, is a ſhrewd ground of ſuſpicion that it is not virtue but deſign, that it is not religion but intereſt which prompts men to it. For if it were religion, and done with regard to God, the very ſame reaſon would oblige them to all other parts of their duty as well as that.

VII. A great zeal for ſome particular party, or opinions, or circumſtances of religion.

This form is frequently aſſumed, becauſe men find the greateſt ſhelter and protection under it. He that declares zealouſly for a party or opinion, and is fierce and eager againſt thoſe that oppoſe it, ſeldom fails to gain the reputation of a religious and godly man; becauſe he hath the vote of the whole party, and a great number to cry him up. And if he be guilty of any miſcarriage, unleſs it be very groſs and viſible, he ſhall never want thoſe that will apologize for him, and be ready to vindicate him at all turns. Either they will not believe what is reported of him, but impute it to malice; or they will extenuate it, and aſcribe it to human infirmity: but ſtill they cannot but think he is a religious

religious man, becauſe he is ſo zealous for that which they eſteem to be ſo conſiderable a part of religion. Nay, ſuch is the horrible partiality and injuſtice of parties, that a very bad man that appears zealous for their way, ſhall eaſily gain the eſteem of a holy and religious man, though he have many viſible and notorious faults; though he be paſſionate and ill-natured, cenſorious and uncharitable, cruel and oppreſſive, ſordid and covetous; when another, who quietly, and without any noiſe and buſtle, minds the ſubſtantial parts of religion, and is truly devoted towards God, juſt and peaceable, and charitable towards men; meek and humble, and patient, kind and friendly even to thoſe that differ from him, ſhall hardly eſcape being cenſured for a lukewarm, formal, moral man, deſtitute of the grace of God and the power of godlineſs.

So likewiſe zeal for or againſt indifferent circumſtances of religion, is another form of godlineſs which many appear in. And commonly ſuch perſons, the more deſtitute they are of true piety and virtue, the greater ſtir they keep about theſe thing, that they may ſeem to be ſomething in religion; juſt like thoſe, who being conſcious to themſelves that they are defective in true and uſeful learning, that they may not ſeem to be ſo, are always troubleſome with the ſhreds and ends of it.

Now, the indifferent circumſtances of religion are things which no man ought to have the face to trouble himſelf about, that neglects the weighty and ſubſtantial duties of it. No man that hath *a beam in his own eye*, ought to be concerned for *the mote that is in his brother's eye*. Indeed he that is careful of the main parts of religion, may and ought to be concerned for the other in their due place, ſo far as the order and decency of God's worſhip, and obedience to authority, and the peace of Chriſtians is concerned in them. But to place all religion in a zeal for or againſt theſe things, is one of the thinneſt and ſlighteſt forms of religion.

VIII. Sillineſs and freakiſhneſs, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concernments of human life.

This may ſeem at firſt hearing to be a very odd form of religion, and indeed ſo it is; yet, in ſeveral religions, men

men have appeared in it with great applauſe and acceptance. Among the Turks, idiots and madmen are mightily reverenced, it being always taken for granted that they are inſpired. And, among the Papiſts, the moſt eminent of their ſaints, if their legends do not belie them, eſpecially St Francis and St Dominic, are magnified ſcarcely for any other reaſon, but for ſaying and doing the moſt ſilly and ridiculous things. What can be imagined more fooliſh and fantaſtical than St Francis's ſtripping himſelf of his cloaths, and running about naked? than his frequent preaching to the birds, and beaſts, and fiſhes? Was ever any thing more naufeouſly ridiculous, than his picking up the lice which were beaten off his cloaths, and putting them in his boſom? which is magnified in him as a profound piece of humility; as if naſtineſs were a Chriſtian grace. Theſe and many more ſuch freaks which are related in his life, as inſtances of his great ſanctity, ſerve to no other purpoſe, but to render religion ridiculous to any man of common ſenſe: As if to be a ſpiritual man, and a mere natural, were all one; and as if this were a good conſequence, that a man cannot chuſe but be very knowing in religion, becauſe he is very ſilly in all other things; and muſt needs have abundance of grace, becauſe he hath no wit. It is pity it ſhould be ſo; but I am afraid it is too true, that the greateſt miſchiefs that have been done to the world, have been done by ſilly well-meaning men.

Laſtly, Great noiſe and talk about religion.

This is as empty a form as any of the reſt, and yet this does ſtrangely pleaſe and ſatisfy a great many. If a man do but mix ſomething of religion with all his diſcourſes, and be often ſpeaking of God and heavenly things, this paſſeth for a more than ordinary character of a religious man. And many deceive themſelves with it, they have talked of religion ſo long, till they believe they have it.

Not but that this is a good thing, provided it be ordered with diſcretion and humility, and be not forced and affected, impertinent and troubleſome. But then we muſt have a great care that other things be anſwerable. Our lives muſt juſtify our godly talk, and our actions

actions muſt give weight to our words; for nothing is more odious, than a religious and good diſcourſe from the mouth of a bad man. This made our Saviour ſo full of indignation againſt the Scribes and Phariſees; they were not what they appeared to be in their diſcourſe and outward garb. *They ſaid and did not;* therefore he compares them to *whited walls and painted ſepulchres, that were beautiful indeed without, but within were full of all uncleanneſs and rottenneſs.*

It is true indeed, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh;* if religion be within, it will appear in mens words as well as actions; this is a fire that will break out: but the beſt men are very modeſt, and make little noiſe, do nothing out of oſtentation, and to be taken notice of, and had rather refrain from good words, than to make an unſeaſonable ſhew of religion.

Speech is intended to ſignify the inward ſenſe of mens minds, but it does not always do ſo; men may be full of religious talk, when there is nothing of religion in their hearts, nothing anſwerable in their lives; men may ſpeak like angels, and yet do like devils.

Therefore let no man deceive himſelf, or think to deceive others with this appearance of religion: for, let men talk never ſo piouſly, every conſiderate man knows that there is more of true religion in one good action, than in a thouſand good words.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing, *viz.* wherein a form of religion doth conſiſt.

Secondly, Wherein *the power of godlineſs* doth conſiſt. And becauſe it is very material to be rightly informed in this, I will reduce the ſeveral particulars to theſe four general heads.

I. A due ſenſe of God, and ſuitable affections towards him.

II. A ſincere and diligent uſe of the means and inſtruments of religion.

III. A firm and ſteady reſolution of well-doing.

IV. As the proper and genuine effect of all theſe, the practice of a good life, in the ſeveral parts and inſtances of it.

I. A due ſenſe of God, and ſuitable affections towards him. This is the principle and fountain of all religion, from whence all actions of piety and goodneſs do ſpring.

Under this I comprehend a lively ſenſe of God's being; which the Apoſtle tells us is fundamentally neceſſary to all religion: *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is.* This is the great ſpring of all religious motions, and of our dependence upon him; the lively ſenſe whereof will make us humble and thankful, and teach *us to acknowledge him in all our ways*, and to refer all our concernments to him; and of our ſubjection to him, which will make us obedient to his laws, and ſubmiſſive to his pleaſure; nothing being more reaſonable than that he that gave us our lives ſhould have the entire government and diſpoſal of them; than that he that made us what we are, ſhould command us what we ſhould do. In ſhort, this comprehends faith in God, or a readineſs to aſſent to what he reveals, with the fear and the love of God, which are the great principles of religion.

II. A ſincere and diligent uſe of the means and inſtruments of religion, ſuch as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving the ſacraments. Theſe are the means which God hath appointed for the improving of us in holineſs and goodneſs; and we ſincerely uſe theſe means, when we really aim at this end; when we pray, and read, and hear, and meditate on God's word, and receive the ſacraments, that we may truly become better, more holy and virtuous in all manner of converſation; and do not reſt in the uſe of theſe means, as if a man were a religious and good man, becauſe he prays often, and every day reads the Bible, and goes to all the ſermons he can hear of, and takes all occaſions to receive the ſacrament. The life of religion does not conſiſt in the bare uſe of theſe, but in the real efficacy of them upon our lives. It is a very good caution which St John gives us, *Be not deceived; he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous*, 1 John iii. 6. Men are apt to impoſe upon themſelves, as if they could be righteous, and approve themſelves to God, upon ſome other terms; whereas only

only *they that fear God, and work righteouſneſs, are accepted with him.*

I do not ſpeak this to undervalue the exerciſes of religion, but to inform men of the true nature and deſign of them. Be as diligent as thou wilt in the exerciſes of piety and devotion, but be ſincere in the uſe of thoſe means; do not ſatisfy thyſelf in the performance of thoſe duties, unleſs thou find the effect of them upon thy heart and life, always remembering, that *not the hearers of the word, but the doers of it, are bleſſed;* that *the prayer, and all the ſacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.*

III. A firm and ſteady reſolution of well-doing. This is the reſult of a true and ſincere repentance, and the great principle of a new life; and if it be firm and ſtedfaſt, it will derive its influence into all our actions; but if it be wavering and inconſiſtent, it is only the occaſion of a religious mood and fit, but not the principle of a religious ſtate. Therefore it concerns us to ſtrengthen this principle, and to be true to it, when we have once taken it up; for whenever we quit it, we break looſe from God and religion at once, and caſt ourſelves back into a much more dangerous ſtate than we were in before.

There is no doubt, but that the devil and our own corrupt hearts will make many aſſaults upon ſuch a reſolution, and raiſe all their batteries againſt it, becauſe it is our main fort, and the great ſecurity of our ſouls, and ſo long as we maintain that, we are ſafe; and therefore it had need be a mighty reſolution that is able to ſtand out againſt ſuch oppoſition.

But what are we that we ſhould take up ſuch a reſolution, and what is our ſtrength? We are weak and *unſtedfaſt as water, reeds ſhaken with the wind; we are not ſufficient of ourſelves, as of ourſelves, for any thing that is good; the way of man is not in himſelf, nor is it in man that walks to direct his ſteps:* but we have a greater ſtrength than our own to rely upon, and greater than that of any adverſe power that can ſet itſelf againſt us; we have God on our ſide, and the aſſiſtance of his grace to back and fortify theſe holy reſolutions; ſo that we have no reaſon to deſpair of ſucceſs and victory, if

we be not wanting to ourſelves: for *God's grace is ſufficient for us; greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.*

IV. And laſtly, which is the proper and genuine effect of all theſe, the practice of a holy and virtuous life in all the parts and inſtances of it. And unleſs this effect be produced, we want the ſureſt evidence of the former: for it is not credible, that that man hath a due ſenſe of God, and pious affections towards him, or does ſincerely exerciſe himſelf in the duties of religion, or is firmly reſolved in well-doing, who does not ſhew forth effects of all this in a good converſation. Thus St James reaſons, chap. iii. 13. *Who is a wiſe man, and endued with knowledge amongſt you?* that is, inſtructed in the Chriſtian knowledge, in the heavenly wiſdom; *let him ſhew forth, out of a good converſation, his works.*

So that herein the power of godlineſs doth viſibly appear in the courſe of a good life; and it is the very deſign of the Apoſtle, in this chapter, to declare this to us, as will appear to any one that conſiders the deſcription here given of thoſe perſons, who, under a ſhew of religion, denied the power of it; they were ſuch as, notwithſtanding all their pretences to godlineſs, allowed themſelves in ſeveral vices, and luſts, and paſſions, and were deſtitute of the virtues of a good life; they were ſelfiſh, and covetous, and vain-glorious, and proud, evil-ſpeakers, diſobedient to parents, unthankful to their benefactors, filthy and impure, treacherous, heady, conceited, ſenſual, and voluptuous; ſo that whatever appearance of godlineſs they made, they were almoſt as bad as could be imagined; there is hardly a fuller catalogue of ſins to be met with in the Bible: beſides that all theſe vices are ſuch as are plain and evident in the lives of men.

So that, upon the whole matter, it is very clear wherein the Apoſtle mainly places the power of godlineſs, namely, in the real effects of religion, ſuch as are the mortifying of our luſts, and ſubduing of our paſſions, the government of our tongues, and the ſeveral virtues of a good life.

1. In the mortifying of our luſts, the luſts of intemperance and uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs, and ambition. He that

that is a ſlave to any of theſe, his religion is but a form, how glorious a ſhew ſoever it may make. *Fleſhly luſts war againſt the ſoul,* and will finally ruin it. Covetouſneſs and pride are enmity to God. *God reſiſts the proud afar off,* and *the covetous man the Lord abhors.*

2. In the ſubduing of our paſſions, wrath, hatred, malice, envy, and revenge. They are the very nature and properties of the devil, and diſpoſitions as contrary to God, as light is to darkneſs; therefore whoever allows himſelf in theſe, whatever pretences he makes to religion, is really a bad man. This St John tells us is a plain caſe: 1 John iii. 10. *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* James iii. 13. 14. *But if ye have bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not againſt the truth,* that is, do not pretend to be religious; *this wiſdom deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh.*

3. In the government of our tongues. This is a great effect of religion, to *keep our tongues from ſpeaking evil,* from backbiting, and ſlandering, and cenſuring, and reviling, from profane ſwearing and curſing, lewd and filthy talking. When mens tongues run out into theſe diſorders, it is a ſign that they are not under the government of religion, and that the fear of God hath not ſeized upon their hearts; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* So St James tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain.* And, on the contrary, it is a good ſign that religion hath ſome power over men, when it reſtrains them in this kind. So the ſame Apoſtle tells us, chap. iii. 2. *If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

4. In the ſeveral virtues of a good life, in oppoſition to theſe and all other vices; ſuch as are truth and juſtice, humility and meekneſs, patience and contentedneſs with our condition, peaceableneſs and charity to thoſe that are in want and neceſſity, a readineſs to forgive our enemies, and an univerſal love and kindneſs to all men. I have not time to recommend theſe particularly to you; the ſcripture does it frequently and fully,

telling us that these are *the will of God, and the divine nature, the new creature, pure religion and undefiled, the wisdom that is from above, the fruits of the Spirit,* the proper and genuine effects of true piety, the sensible and substantial evidences of our love to God, the things wherein *the kingdom of God consists,* and that *he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men;* but he that neglects these, whatever *form of godliness* he puts on, *is a denier of the power of it. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. He that doth not righteousness, is not of God.*

Thus I have done with the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, wherein *the power of godliness consists.* There are two other particulars remaining, which I shall reserve to a farther opportunity.

SERMON CCV.

Of the form, and the power of godliness.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

The second sermon on this text.

THE third thing propounded, was to give some marks, whereby we may know when these are separated, when there is *a form of religion* without *the power of it.*

I need not insist long upon this, because this will, in a good measure, appear by the account I have given of these two severally, of the form of religion, and of the power of it; for he that considers wherein each of these consists, will easily judge when they are separated. But yet, that we may be sure not to mistake in a matter of so great concernment, I will instance in two or three

three groſs and palpable characters of this, and they are ſo comprehenſive as to contain moſt of the reſt.

I. He hath only *a form of godlineſs*, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward ſenſe of it.

II. He that uſeth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of it.

III. He that is groſsly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it.

I. He hath only *a form of godlineſs*, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward ſenſe of it. He that worſhips and ſerves God outwardly, but hath no inward reverence and eſteem for him, who cares not, ſo the work be done, and the duty performed, with what heart and affection he does it. This is a mere carcaſe of religion, which is ſo far from being pleaſing to God, that it is intolerably offenſive to him; for though it be outwardly an honour done to God, yet really and in truth it is a contempt of him.

And yet it is to be feared, that this is a religion which many in the world chuſe and content themſelves with. They can ſerve God an hour together, and mention his name an hundred times, without ever thinking of him, or being affected with the buſineſs they are about: nay, which is worſe, this is a religion which a great part of the world uſe, and cannot help it; I mean all thoſe who ſerve God in an unknown tongue. For how is it poſſible their minds and hearts can be concerned in a ſervice they do not underſtand? They may poſſibly have a devout mind in general; but they cannot exerciſe any acts of devotion in the particular ſervice they are engaged in. The beſt of men are apt enough to let their thoughts ſwerve, and go aſtray from God when they are worſhipping of him, though they underſtand the ſervice they are about; but when they do not underſtand, it is impoſſible their minds and thoughts ſhould go along with it, and be concerned in what is done. This is properly, and in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, μόρφωσις ἐυσεβείας, "an image of religion and "devotion, without any life or ſenſe." And if to have our bodies put in a devout poſture, to move our hands, and lips, and eyes, without underſtanding the ſervice we

we offer to God, may be accounted worſhipping of him, this is a ſervice that may be performed by puppets as well as men. *God is a Spirit; and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth. In ſpirit and in truth,* in oppoſition to a mere bodily ſervice, and external ſhew of devotion. God, who is a ſpirit, muſt be worſhipped with our ſpirits. He expects from reaſonable creatures a reaſonable ſervice; and that ſervice only is reaſonable, which is dictated by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections: and to worſhip him otherwiſe, is to offer a ſacrifice without a heart; it is to *offer the lame and the blind in ſacrifice,* which would be an affront to our governor, much more to the great King of the world. Whatever we do in the ſervice of God, we muſt *do it heartily as to the Lord,* becauſe he is *the ſearcher of hearts, and all things are open and naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

II. He hath only *a form of godlineſs,* that uſeth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of them. A man may exerciſe his underſtanding in the ſervice of God, and his heart may be touched, and his affections moved in prayer, and at the hearing of God's word, and the receiving of the ſacrament, and yet this may be but a form of religion, if it go no farther. If we do not forſake thoſe ſins we confeſs to God, and daily beg the pardon of; if we do not truly and heartily endeavour that we may live godly, and righteous and ſober lives, as well as pray that we may do ſo; if the counſels and directions of God's word have not an influence upon our lives; if we be not awed by the threatenings of it, to leave our ſins, and encouraged by the promiſes of it, to *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit,* and to *perfect holineſs in the fear of God*; we uſe the means of religion to no purpoſe, and we diſcredit the inſtitutions of God, becauſe we make no proficiency under them. We are juſt like the diſciples of thoſe formal profeſſors of religion, whom the Apoſtle deſcribes after the text, who are *ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* It ſeems they uſed the means of inſtruction, and continued to uſe them, *they were ever learning*; but all this while

while they were under the dominion of ſin, and the power of their luſts; *they were laden with ſin, and led away with divers luſts*, and ſo they never attained to that which the Apoſtle calls *the knowledge of the truth*, that is, ſuch a knowledge of the doctrine of Chriſt as is accompanied with a ſuitable practice, according to that of our Saviour, John viii. 31. *If ye continue in my word*, that is, if ye practiſe my doctrine, *then are ye my diſciples indeed, and ye ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall make you free.* Then men come to the knowledge of the truth, when it frees them from the ſlavery of ſin. If our knowledge have not this effect, it ſignifies nothing, and does not deſerve the name of knowledge, becauſe *we know nothing in religion as we ought to know.* 1 John ii. 2. 3. ſpeaking of the knowledge of Chriſt, *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that ſaith he knows him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

III. He hath only *a form of religion*, who is groſsly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it. And this ſort of perſons are thoſe whom the Apoſtle particularly intended here in the text; for ſuch were they whom he deſcribes by this character, that *they had a form of godlineſs, but denied the power of it.* Under the garb of religion which they had put on, they were groſsly faulty in their lives and practice, and mainly defective in many of the eſſential duties of Chriſtianity; they were ſelfiſh and covetous, vain-glorious and deſpiſers of others, calumniators and ſlanderers, undutiful to their ſuperiors, and unthankful to thoſe that had obliged them, fierce and ill-natured, treacherous and falſe to their word, perſecutors of thoſe that were good, filthy and ſenſual: not that every one of them had all theſe vices, they are ſo many and groſs, that no cloak of religion could have covered them; but the Apoſtle means, that among thoſe that made an empty profeſſion of religion, theſe vices were viſible, ſome of them in one, and ſome in another. And the living in any one of theſe, or any other of the like nature, is inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity. The power of religion appears chiefly in the ſubduing of theſe luſts, and in the exerciſe and practice of thoſe graces and

virtues

virtues which are contrary to these. Here the very heart and life of religion lies, and these are the veins in which it runs; and if there be a failure in any of these main virtues of a Christian life, it is a plain case, that we are destitute of the power of religion, and do only make a vain and empty shew of it. St James instanceth, as one would think, in none of the grossest and most considerable of these, the government of our tongue, and yet he peremptorily determines, that the want of this virtue is enough to destroy all a man's other pretences to religion, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceives his own heart; this man's religion is vain.*

So that, by the practice or neglect of these main virtues of a good life, every man may examine and judge himself. This is the rule which our Saviour gives to try the religion of men by: Matth. vii. 16. 17. *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* The force of which reasoning is this, that every tree bringeth forth fruit according to its nature, and by the kind and quality of the fruit, you may certainly know what the tree is. So, by the good or bad actions of mens lives, you may know by what principle they are governed, whether the fear of God, or the love of sin, bear sway in them; the course of their lives will discover the bent and inclination of their minds, whatever shew and profession they may make to the contrary. *By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,* (there is some profession of religion), *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven;* (there is the power of it).

I would by no means encourage men to be over censorious towards others, there is too much of that spirit already in the world; but it is not amiss that men should be strict and severe towards themselves. And would to God men would bring themselves to this test.

and

and examine the truth and ſincerity of their religion, not by the leaves of an outward profeſſion, but by the fruits it produceth in their lives. Every man that will but take the pains to look into himſelf, and to obſerve his own actions, may, by comparing the temper of his mind, and the general courſe of his life and practice, with the rules and precepts of religion, eaſily diſcern what power and efficacy religion hath on him. A man may as certainly know himſelf, and make as ſure a judgment of his ſtate and condition toward God in this way, *as a tree is known by its fruit.* Therefore let us not flatter ourſelves: for if we indulge any luſt, or irregular paſſion in our ſouls, and do not endeavour to mortify and ſubdue it; if we allow ourſelves in any vitious practice in our lives; we do but deceive ourſelves with an opinion of our godlineſs, and whatever ſhew and appearance we may make of religion, we are certainly deſtitute of the power of it. True religion and godlineſs is an uniform principle, which inclines a man to all holineſs and goodneſs, and does biaſs him againſt all known ſin and wickedneſs. All the motives and arguments of religion, and all conſiderations of piety, are levelled againſt all ſin, and tend to engage men to univerſal holineſs of life. *Bonum conſtat ex integris cauſis, ſed malum ex quolibet defectu:* the practice of any one vice, is enough to render a man a bad man; but there muſt be the concurrence of all the parts of religion and virtue, to make a man good.

I proceed to the fourth thing I propounded, which was to ſhew, that *a form of godlineſs*, without *the power of it*, is inſignificant to all the great ends and purpoſes of religion. The great ends that men can reaſonably propound to themſelves in being religious, are theſe three.

I. The pleaſing of God.

II. The peace and tranquillity of our own minds.

III. The ſaving of our ſouls. Now, *a form of godlineſs*, without *the power of it*, is unavailable to all theſe purpoſes.

I. To the pleaſing of God. External devotion, and exerciſing ourſelves in the means and inſtruments of religion, and the profeſſion of a right belief, or any other form of religion whatſoever, do not recommend any

any man to the divine favour and acceptance, without the real effects of religion in a good life: nay, so far is it from this, that all forms of religion, destitute of the life and power of it, are extremely odious and offensive to him. Devotion in prayer, without a holy life, is but a rude and troublesome noise in the ears of the Almighty. *The prayer of the wicked* is so far from being accepted, that it *is an abomination to him.* He does not love to be invoked by unhallowed mouths, and to be praised by the workers of iniquity. Flattery is hateful to a wise man, much more to the infinitely wise God. He cannot endure that men should lift up eyes to him *that are full of adultery, and hands filled with violence and oppression, and tread his courts with feet ready to shed blood.* It is an affront to God to be worshipped by evil-doers, and to see men diligent in reading his word, and attending to his law, who break it every day. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and castest my words behind thy back?* What God says of the sacrifices of the Jews, offered to him by *a sinful people laden with iniquity*, may be applied to the worship of Christians who live wicked and abominable lives, Is. i. 11. 12. *&c. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offering of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.* This is that which God expects from us, the amendment and reformation of our lives, and without this all our religious addresses to him are nauseous and abominable. God does hardly any where

where in scripture expres so great a detestation of the greatest sins, as he does of the devotion of wicked men. I will but bring one text more to this purpose, Is. lxvi. 3. *He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.* What is the reason of all these severe expressions? Because they were *the sacrifices of the wicked*, of those *who had chosen their own ways, and whose soul delighted in their abominations*; they worshipped God according to his will, but lived according to their own; and therefore they were to him no better than an assembly of murderers, and a church of idolatrous worshippers: for this is false worship, to offer sacrifices to God, and to devote ourselves to the service of our lusts.

II. Another end of religion is the peace and tranquillity of our minds. And this is not to be attained upon true and lasting grounds, by any form of religion without the power of it. Men may delude themselves with some false peace, and make a hard shift to stop the loud and vehement clamours of their conscience; but the guilt of any vitious course of life will frequently recoil upon them, to disturb and interrupt their peace, and to put out their false joy; their consciences will ever and anon give them many secret girds and lashes. For no man can knowingly live in the practice of any sin, but he must be guilty to himself; and whoever is guilty, hath received a secret sting into his heart, which is never to be taken out but by repentance, and a thorough reformation. God hath said it, and I doubt not but every sinner finds it true, *There is no peace to the wicked.* Especially when such a man is seized upon by sickness, and approaches in his thoughts near to eternity, then his drowsy conscience awakes, like a lion out of sleep, full of rage and fierceness, and all his false peace and comfort vanisheth. *For what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God comes to take away his soul?* It is, as Job elegantly expresses it, *like the spider's web*, artificially wrought, but miserably weak, it can endure no stress, upon the least touch it breaks and vanisheth.

And this is no small disadvantage which a man that hath only *the form of religion* lies under, that in effect he loseth all the pleasure and satisfaction of religion; or if he fancy any hope or comfort to himself, it is built upon a false foundation, which, when it is tried, will endure no shock. This is the comparison our Saviour useth in this very case, Matth. vii. 26. 27. *Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not,* (here is *a form of godliness* without *the power of it*), *shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.* But real and substantial religion is like *a house built upon a rock*, which no tempest can overthrow. *Righteousness*, saith Solomon, Prov. x. 25. *is an everlasting foundation*; it is a continual spring of joy and peace. There is a certain unspeakable contentment and delight arising from a good conscience, and from the sincere discharge of our duty, which a hypocrite is a stranger to, and is never admitted to the taste of. Now, what an uncomfortable thing is this, for a man to take the pains to seem to be religious, and yet to lose the real pleasure of religion!

III. The great end of all, of being religious, is the saving of our souls. And this end a mere *form of religion* will certainly miss of. No external garb of religion will gain a man admission into heaven; there is no getting in there in masquerade; no prayers will then avail, though never so fervent and importunate. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and yet he will bid them depart from him.* Though we had heard Christ himself preach, and had received the blessed sacrament with him, yet this will not avail. So our Saviour tells us, Luke xiii. 26. *Then shall they begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;* and yet *he will say unto them, I know not whence you are.* It is not a pretence to inspiration, no, though it were justified by miraculous gifts, that will then stand us in stead. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous words?* And yet these shall be

be rejected. Why, what should be the reason of all this severity? Our Saviour gives us a plain account of it; because they were *workers of iniquity*. Under all these several masks of religion, they were wicked in their lives.

It is not an orthodox faith, and the belief of all the articles of Christianity, that will save a man, without the works of a good life: Jam. ii. 14. *What doth it profit a man, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him? thou believest there is one God; thou dost well; the devils believe* this too, but they are not so vain as to hope to be saved by this faith; no, they know the contrary, and that makes them fear and tremble. *Know then, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.* Thou believest *in one Lord Jesus Christ, that came down from heaven to save us, that was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, and became man that he might bring us to God; that suffered and died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and is ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty, and from thence he shall come again at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead;* thou dost well to believe this: but if thou do not live accordingly, what will become of thee, when the Son of God shall come to judge the world? then the great inquiry will be, how we have lived? what good we have done? So our Saviour represents the proceedings of that great day: *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not:* therefore *depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* So that it seems here the business will stick, upon the good and bad actions of mens lives, and accordingly sentence shall be pronounced upon them. *For God will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also*

to the Gentile: for *not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.* Still you see that it is to *the patient continuance in well-doing*, to *the obeying of the truth*, to *the working of righteousness*, that *eternal life* is promised: *and the wrath of God* is threatened to *them that obey unrighteousness*, to *every soul of man that doth evil. To the Jew first.* Why so? Because he had great advantage of coming to the knowledge of the truth, which is so much the greater aggravation of his wicked life, and makes his sentence so much the heavier.

Indeed it shall be to men at the day of judgment likewise according to their faith, in a certain sense, that is, according to the doctrine of the gospel which they profess to believe; according to what our Saviour and his Apostles have taught, that *the workers of iniquity shall depart from him; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if we live after the flesh, we shall die;* that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous person, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and of Christ.* This we profess to believe, and according to these declarations God will proceed with men at the great day. And he that believes this, and yet goes on in an impiety and wickedness of life, though his faith will not justify him, yet God will justify his faith, and make it good, when *he shall judge the world in righteousness.*

Thus you see plainly, that *a form of godliness*, without the power, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religon; nay, he that takes up in a form, does not only lose the advantages of religion, but he hath two great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this very account.

But these, with the application, I shall refer to the next opportunity.

SER-

SERMON CCVI.

Of the form, and the power of godliness.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

The third sermon on this text.

I Come now to shew, that he that takes upon him *a form of religion, without the power of it,* doth not only lose all the considerable advantages of religion, but he hath two great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this account, that he hath a form of religion, and yet is destitute of the power of it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefit of it. And it is no small trouble to personate and act a part well; it requires great art and attention, great guard and caution. That which men are prompted to by an inward principle, is natural and easy, it is done with pleasure and delight; but whatever is artificial and counterfeit, is stiff and forced. *Nemo fictam personam diu sustinere potest;* "No man can dissemble always;" one time or other he will be surprised, and forget himself, and let his mask fall. A form of religion is a dry unpleasant thing, and a continual burden to him that assumes it, and the more outwardly strict and holy he is, he is the more inwardly guilty; his conscience never stings and galls him more than when he is playing the hypocrite with God and men: whereas a truly good man when he employs himself in acts of religion, or justice, or charity, he doth it naturally, and hath a mighty satisfaction of mind in the doing of it, and if he were permitted to

make his own choice, he would not do otherwise; but a hypocrite puts a force upon himself all the while, and acts against his nature and inclinations; every thing that he does in religion goes against the grain, and because it is unnatural must be uneasy; his outward conversation and demeanour is set, and in a frame; he does not move as he would, but as he must; and the secret propensions of his nature are under a continual restraint.

He hath indeed one advantage by his artificial garb, that he can more securely over-reach and defraud others by a shew of godliness, while men are not aware of his dissimulation. But this commonly does not last long, and only serves a man for a few turns: and when it is discovered, the man is lost, and nobody will trust him. But suppose he could serve himself of religion this way for some considerable time, where is the advantage? It amounts to no more than this, that the man hath the opportunity of being a greater sinner, of making himself more miserable, and *treasuring up to himself more wrath against the day of wrath.* So that he pays dear for all this in the end and issue, as well as in the way. He spends many a tedious hour in the service of God, and the exercise of religion; more it may be than many do, who save their souls, and get to heaven. For as to the external parts of religion, a hypocrite must do all that which a truly religious man does; he must frequent the church, and make as much shew of devotion as the best; nay, it may be he prays more, and fasts oftener, and is more busy, and keeps a greater stir in the outward part of religion, than the sincere Christian; for being conscious to himself of his own hollowness and insincerity in religion, he thinks himself obliged outwardly to overact it in unseasonable and superstitious observances, and in all other arts of affected devotion; and when he goes abroad into the world, he is forced to lay great restraints upon himself, and to be continually gathering his cloak about him, as being afraid lest any body should spy what is under it. So much more troublesome it is for any man to seem to be religious, than to be so indeed.

II. A mere form of religion does, upon some accounts, bring a man under a heavier sentence, than if he were

were openly profane and irreligious. He that makes a shew of religion, flatters God, but all the while acts and designs against him: whereas the profane man deals plainly; and though he be a monstrous and unnatural rebel, yet he is a fair and open enemy; and the kisses of a false friend are more hateful than the wounds of an open enemy. Upon this account it is, that our Saviour denounces so many severe woes against the Scribes and Pharisees, because they were wicked under a shew of religion, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites:* and when he would set forth the severity of the Lord against the evil servant, Matth. xxiv. 51. he expresseth it thus, *He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* as if the punishment of hypocrites were the rule and standard of the severest punishment. *He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.*

I will not deny but that a profane man is a worse example to the world, and may do more mischief upon that account: but the hypocrite is more mischievous to himself, and of the two more odious to God; and sometimes does more prejudice to religion, by undermining it, than the other does by all his open assaults and batteries. God cannot endure to be affronted: but he hates to be mocked. So that, upon this account, it is like to go harder with the formal professors of religion, than with the open contemners of it.

And thus I have done with the four things I propounded to speak to, from these words; wherein a form of godliness does consist; wherein the power of it lies; by what marks and characters we may know when these are separated; and that a form of religion, without the power of it, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion; and not only so, but it is greatly to mens disadvantage to assume a form of godliness, if they be destitute of the power of it.

All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from this discourse, by way of application; and they shall be these three.

First, To take heed of mistaking *the form of religion for the power of it.*

Secondly,

Secondly, To take heed of being captivated and seduced by those who have only a *form of godliness*.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the life, and power, and substance of religion.

First, To take heed of mistaking *the form of religion for the power of it*. The Papists have almost confined the words *religion* and *religious* to cloisters and monks; and they make a religious life to consist in masses, and Ave-Maries, and Pater-nosters, in the observation of canonical hours, and the distinction of meats and habits, in coarse cloaths, and a dissembled poverty, and several bodily rigours and severities; as if to make a man a religious and good man, it were necessary that he should be dressed fantastically, and in a great many indifferent things be different from other men. Nay, so far doth this superstition prevail, that a great many think that they should hardly get to heaven without it, or that it will be very much for their advantage, if they be buried in the habit of a religious man: as if to be put in a monk's coul, would give a man the start of other people at the resurrection. But what reason is there, that the name and title of religion should be appropriated to these usages? Does the scripture any where constitute religion in these things, or confine it to them? are not these voluntary things, which God ties no man to? whence then come they to swallow up the name of religion, and to ingross it to themselves, as if they were the very life and soul of Christianity; when the great author of our religion Jesus Christ, and his blessed apostles, never spake one word of them? What an abuse of language is this, to confine the name of religion to that which is not so much as any part of it!

But the church of Rome is not alone guilty of this: among ourselves it is very ordinary to mistake *the form of godliness for the power*, though the mistake is not so gross, as in those particulars I have mentioned. How many are there who talk as if *the power of godliness* consisted in nothing else but a daily task of devotion, in frequent hearing of sermons, and a strict observation of the Lord's day? These are very good things; but they are but a *form of godliness*, and may be, and often are, without

out *the power of it*; they are but the means and instruments of religion, but not the great end and design of it; that consists in the renewing of our natures, and the reformation of our lives, in *righteousness and true holiness; in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts of it*, such as are *adultery, fornication, hatred, variance, wrath, sedition, envying, murder, drunkenness; for they which do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; and in *the fruits of the spirit*, such as are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance*, as the Apostle reckons them up, Gal. v. 22. These are real and sensible effects of religion; and the means of religion, if they be sincerely used, do all tend to the begetting and increasing of these in us; so that it is a gross mistake to talk of the power of religion without these. Whoever is destitute of these, whatever attainments in religion he may pretend to, is got no farther than a form of godliness, he is not yet under the power of it. This is the first.

Secondly, Let us be cautioned against being captivated and seduced by those who have only a form of godliness. This is the Apostle's exhortation here in the text, *From such turn away; for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women.* To the same purpose is our Saviour's caution, Matth. vii. 15. 16. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* And that we may know how to avoid them, our Saviour bids us to observe their lives: *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* He does not bid us examine their opinions, and try their pretences to inspiration; that is a thing many times above the capacity of the ordinary sort of men; but their lives and actions are open to every man's view; and though it is possible men may counterfeit even in this, yet they seldom do it so exactly, as not to betray themselves some time or other: however, this of all other is the easiest and surest rule; *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

Therefore if any man pretend to any new discoveries in religion, beyond what is plainly revealed in scripture though he appear in never so sanctimonious a garb, be not moved with this: for *the power of religion* does not consist

consist in any thing now to be discovered; but in those things which are clearly contained in the word of God, in the precepts and directions, and in the motives and arguments to a good life; and whoever lives according to these, is in the best way to heaven that any man can put himself into; and he need not trouble himself about those new lights and opinions, which in every age appear like comets, and glare a while, and draw people to gaze upon them, and then vanish. And none are so much to be suspected of *a form of religion*, as those who make frequent changes in it, and wander from one party and opinion to another. An outward form and shape is easily changed; it is that which a man shifts and puts off at pleasure.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the power, and life, and substance of religion. It was the commendation of Socrates, the best of philosophers, that he did *philosophiam de cœlo deducere*, "bring down philosophy "from heaven to earth," that is, from contemplation to practice, and from being an art of talking and disputing to be an art of living. This I desire may be the aim of all my discourses, to instruct men in religion in order to the practice of it, to teach men to know God, in St John's sense, 1 John ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* This is the great end and scope to which all discourses of religion ought to be levelled. It was a good saying of Pacuvius, *Ego odi homines ignava opera et philosophos sententia*, "I "hate men that are unactive in their lives, and phi- "losophers in their opinions." Christianity is the best philosophy, and the most perfect institution of life that ever the world was acquainted withal; and therefore it is much more odious to see men Christians in their profession, and faulty and vitious in their lives; because the very design of the Christian religion is to give men a perfect and plain law and rule of life, and to enforce this law by the most powerful and prevailing arguments. So that as Tully says concerning the philosopher who lived but a bad life, that he was utterly inexcusable, *Quod in eo cujus magister esse vult labitur, artem vitæ professus, delinquit in vita;* "Because he failed "in that wherein he pretended to be a master, and while

"he

" he professed to have an art of living better than other " men, he offended and miscarried in his life:" all defects in the practice, and in the virtues of a good life, may with much more reason and justice be upbraided to Christians, to those *who have learned Christ, who have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;* to those who are blessed with the clearest and most perfect revelation which ever God made to the world, the holiest and most reasonable religion, which furnisheth us with the best counsels and directions, the most prevalent motives and arguments, and the greatest helps and advantages to a good life; a religion plain and simple, that hath less of outward form and pomp, and more of substance and reality, than any religion that ever was known in the world.

What a sad thing is it, that a religion so wholly fitted and calculated to the design and purpose of a good life, armed with such powerful considerations to engage men thereto, should yet have so little force and power upon the lives of men, as we see it generally to have! As if *the grace of God had never appeared to men, to teach them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.*

There was hardly ever any age, wherein *the form of religion* did more abound, and there were greater variety in them; and it is to be feared that there was never less of the power and efficacy of it.

I will instance in two great defects in the lives and practice of Christians, which are visible to every one, but are sad indications how little *the power of religion* prevails among men; I mean the want of common honesty and integrity among men, and the want of peace and love; the first of which is the great virtue of civil conversation, and the other, the great bond both of civil and ecclesiastical societies. These are two great duties of religion frequently mentioned, and strictly charged upon the conscience of men in scripture: and yet how rare is the practice of them in the lives of Christians? These are two main defects in religion, and a plain demonstration of *a form of religion, without the power of it.*

I. The

I. The want of common honesty and integrity among men. So indeed it used to be called, common honesty; but it grows so rare now, that it is like to lose that name. *Righteousness, truth, and faithfulness, are almost failed from among the children of men;* all ranks of men have corrupted themselves in this kind; this is grown almost an universal depravation, there is hardly any trade or profession which hath not something of knavery and falsehood woven into the very mystery of it, and is become almost a necessary part of it. Where is the generous honesty and uprightness which did heretofore possess the spirits of men, and which is an inseparable companion of true courage? but we are now passing apace into foreign manners and vices, and any form of religion will serve, when justice and integrity are gone.

II. The want of peace and love. How full of factions and divisions are we? and these managed with all imaginable heat and animosity one toward another; as if the badge of Christianity were changed, and our Saviour had said, *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye hate one another.*

All the differences among Christians, of what denomination soever, are sadly to be lamented; but I almost despair as to the difference between us and the church of Rome, because the reconciliation is impossible, unless they renounce their principles. They cannot come over to us, because they think they are infallible; and we cannot pass over to them, because we know they are deceived; so that there is *a great gulf between us and them.* We must not only renounce the scriptures, but our reason and our senses, to be of their mind. We cannot communicate with them in the sacrament, because they have taken away one half of it, which is as plainly instituted and commanded, as the other part, which is left. We cannot worship the virgin Mary, and the saints, much less their images, because it is written, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.* In short,

several

ſeveral of their articles of faith are ſuch as no credulity can ſwallow; and ſeveral parts of their worſhip are ſuch as no piety can join with.

But this we bewail, that thoſe who agree in the ſame eſſentials of faith and worſhip ſhould be ſo forward to divide and ſeparate from one another, merely upon forms of government, and circumſtances of worſhip. What can juſtify the breach of communion and peace, upon ſuch terms? Either church-government is of divine right, or it is not. If it be, why do not men ſubmit to the form which is eſtabliſhed by authority? If it be not, what kind of government can contend for that right, with any equality of advantage, againſt that which cannot be denied to have almoſt univerſally obtained in moſt ages and parts of the Chriſtian world?

As for the circumſtances of worſhip, there is ſcarce any man hath the face to contend, that any of thoſe uſed in our church are clearly condemned by the word of God; and what elſe can make them unlawful? One of the chief cauſes of ſeparation, *is a form of prayer;* the lawfulneſs of which our Saviour hath abundantly juſtified, and I do not think was ever queſtioned by any writer in the Chriſtian church, for near upon ſixteen hundred years; and is it worth while to break the peace of the church, and violate one of the greateſt precepts of Chriſtianity, upon little and ſlight pretences of unlawfulneſs, and doubtful reaſons of convenience and expedience; and about ſuch things as are no more reaſonable grounds of quarrels among Chriſtians, than the differences of mens ſtature and faces would be a juſt ground for mankind to make war upon one another?

Where is *the power of religion,* when the peace and unity of Chriſtians is violated upon theſe terms? It is a ſign that the life and ſubſtance of religion is little regarded by us, when men can afford to employ ſo much zeal about theſe things.

And that men may be effectually perſuaded to mind the ſubſtance of religion more, let me deſire them to imprint theſe three conſiderations upon their minds.

I. That the parts of religion are ſubordinate to one another, and are to be minded each in their due place. The means of religion are leſs worth than the end, and

therefore deſerve our regard chiefly in order to that. The circumſtances of religion are leſs conſiderable than the means and inſtruments of it, and therefore are to be ſubordinated to them. Faith is in order to the practice of a good life, and ſignifies nothing, unleſs it produces that. So that the iſſue and upſhot of all is a holy and virtuous life; *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; to love God and our neighbour;* to deal juſtly, and to be kind, and peaceable, and charitable towards all men.

II. Conſider that religion conſiſts in an entire and univerſal obedience to the will of God, in *a reſpect to all his commandments, and hating every evil way.* Here *the power of godlineſs* conſiſts in being *holy in all manner of converſation.*

III. Conſider that religion chiefly reſpects God, and another world. *A form of religion,* if it were artificially contrived, might poſſibly ſerve to cheat men, and be uſeful enough to all the intereſts and advantages of this world: but we are to do all things in reference to God, who cannot be impoſed upon with ſhews and pretences; and with regard to another world, where no form of religion will be current, without the power of it. Yea, and in reference to this world, if there be any advantage in ſeeming religious, certainly the beſt way *to ſeem to be ſo, is to be ſo indeed.*

SER-

SERMON CCVII.

Of the neceſſity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. Theſe things are good and profitable unto men.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THis epiſtle of St Paul to Titus, whom he had made Biſhop of Crete, contains directions how he ought to demean himſelf in that great charge.

1. By appointing in every city biſhops or elders, to teach and govern thoſe that were already, or ſhould afterwards by their means be converted to the faith of Chriſt; and to be very careful to make choice of worthy and fit perſons into this high office; men of ſound doctrine and unblameable lives, chap. i. from ver. 5. to the end.

2. By his own doctrine and converſation among them. And this is the ſubject of the two following chapters, in which he gives him a ſtrict charge, to be very careful both of his doctrine and his life. Of his doctrine, that it be according to the ſoundneſs and purity of the goſpel; not ſuch corrupt and adulterate ſtuff, as the falſe apoſtles and teachers were wont to vend among them: chap. ii. 1. *But ſpeak thou the things which become ſound doctrine;* which he elſewhere calls *the doctrine of truth which is according to godlineſs,* ſuch a doctrine as tends to reform the lives of men, to make them better, and more like to God. And then he ſhould be careful likewiſe, that his life and converſation be exemplary in all virtue and goodneſs; without which the

beſt words will be of little weight, and the wiſeſt doctrines and counſels of ſmall efficacy and force to perſuade others to the practice of them, ver. 7. *In all things ſhewing thyſelf a pattern of good works.* When ſound doctrine is ſeconded by the good life of the teacher, it muſt have great authority and force of perſuaſion: ver. 15. *Theſe things ſpeak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority; let no man deſpiſe thee.* If the miniſter of God do but ſo preach and ſo live, this will give him authority, and ſet him above contempt; let men deſpiſe ſuch an one if they can.

More particularly, as he would have him inſtruct men in general in all the virtues of a good life; ſo more eſpecially, the ſeveral ages and conditions of men in the duties and virtues reſpectively belonging to them; to young and old, men and women.

And becauſe great ſcandal had been brought upon the Chriſtian religion, by the undutiful carriage of ſervants and ſubjects towards their maſters and magiſtrates, upon a falſe notion of Chriſtian liberty, advanced and propagated by the falſe apoſtles and Gnoſtic libertines, he gives Titus, in particular, charge to put Chriſtians in mind of their duty in this particular, and to inculcate it earneſtly upon them, that the Chriſtian religion might not be ſlandered upon this account: chap. ii. ver. 9. 10. *Exhort ſervants to be obedient to their maſters*, &c. *that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* Chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, and to be ready to every good work*; that is, in ſhort, to endeavour to be good in all relations, and in all ſorts and kinds of goodneſs.

And then, ver. 8. he lays great ſtreſs and weight upon this matter, that Chriſtians ſhould conſtantly and upon all occaſions be taught the great neceſſity of the virtues of a good life. *This is a faithful ſaying*, &c. By which ſolemn and vehement kind of expreſſion, the Apoſtle ſeems to inſinuate, that the falſe apoſtles did exalt the virtue of faith, to the prejudice and neglect of a good life; as if, by a mere ſpeculative belief and profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, men were diſcharged and releaſed from the practice of all virtue and goodneſs. And this is very probable, becauſe we find

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theſe kind of licentious doctrines very frequently reflected on, and reproved by the apoſtles in their epiſtles, and eſpecially by St Paul. The falſe apoſtles made the Chriſtian religion a matter of mere ſpeculation and diſpute, but laid no weight upon the virtues of a good life. And therefore St Paul, after he had charged Titus to inculcate upon Chriſtians the neceſſity of good works, immediately adds, *But avoid fooliſh queſtions, and genealogies, and contentions, and ſtrivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain;* intimating, that the falſe apoſtles, inſtead of preſſing the neceſſity of a good life, did amuſe people with theſe idle notions and diſputes.

But to return to my text: *This is a faithful ſaying.* This kind of preface the Apoſtle uſeth ſeveral times, but always when he is ſpeaking of ſomething that is of great weight and concernment to us, and which deſerves our ſerious attention and regard; as in 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things; having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful ſaying.* And 2 Tim. ii. 11. 12. *This is a faithful ſaying; if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him; if we deny him, he alſo will deny us.* And ſo likewiſe here in the text, *This is a faithful ſaying, that they which have believed in God, ſhould be careful to maintain good works.* By which you ſee, that it is not a form which the Apoſtle uſeth of courſe, and applies to any thing, but only to things of more than ordinary conſideration and regard, ſuch as are of the eſſence of Chriſtianity, and fundamental to the belief and practice of it.

This is a faithful ſaying, πιστὸς λόγος, *a credible ſaying,* that which every man that truly underſtands the nature and deſign of religion will readily aſſent to.

And this I will that thou affirm conſtantly. He chargeth him to preach this upon all occaſions, leſt the doctrine of juſtification by faith and by grace, without any works of righteouſneſs preceding, ſhould be turned into licentiouſneſs, as it had been by ſome, and men ſhould falſely con-

clude, that becauſe works of righteouſneſs were not neceſſary before juſtification, and to bring men into that ſtate, they were not neceſſary neither afterwards to our continuance in that ſtate.

The Apoſtle indeed did teach that *God did juſtify the ungodly*, by the grace of the goſpel, and *faith in Chriſt*; that is, that thoſe who did ſincerely believe and embrace the goſpel, though they had been never ſo great ſinners before, were juſtified upon that faith; that is, all their former ſins were forgiven, and they were received into the favour of God. But though works of righteouſneſs were not neceſſary before their juſtification, yet they are neceſſary afterwards, becauſe the faith of the goſpel, and the embracing of Chriſtianity, doth imply a ſtipulation and engagement on our part, to live according to the laws and rules of the goſpel, which do ſtrictly injoin all kind of virtue and goodneſs. The covenant of baptiſm, by which we are entered into Chriſtianity, doth contain on our part not only a profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, but a ſolemn promiſe *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* So that it is the greateſt miſtake in the world to think, that becauſe we are juſtified by faith and the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, without works of righteouſneſs, therefore we are under no obligation to a good life: for faith in Chriſt, and the ſincere profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, doth imply a good life, and an engagement to the practice of all virtue and goodneſs; which if we do not perform and make good, we fail in our part of the covenant, and thereby forfeit all the bleſſings and benefits promiſed therein on God's part.

Therefore it is obſervable, that the Apoſtle, after he had ſpoken of our juſtification by grace, without works of righteouſneſs, gives this charge to Titus, to preſs the neceſſity of good works upon thoſe who did believe, and embrace the profeſſion of the goſpel, as it were on purpoſe to prevent all miſtake and abuſe of the doctrine of juſtification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt: ver. 5. 6. 7. *Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done; but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing*

newing of the Holy Ghoſt, which he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour; that is, by our ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity at our baptiſm; *that being juſtified by his grace, we ſhould be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.* And then he adds, ver. 8. *This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works;* that is, that they who are thus juſtified by the faith of the goſpel, ſhould be ſo far from thinking themſelves hereby excuſed from good works, that they ſhould upon this account be more careful to maintain and practiſe them, becauſe by the very profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith and religion, they have ſolemnly engaged themſelves ſo to do.

That they which believe in God; that is, who have taken upon them the profeſſion of Chriſtianity in their baptiſm. For it is not improbable, that the Apoſtle, having ſpoken of baptiſm juſt before, may, by this phraſe of *believing in God*, refer to that profeſſion of faith made in baptiſm, which began with theſe words, *I believe in God;* and then, *they which have believed in God*, are thoſe who in baptiſm have made a ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity: as if he had ſaid, *Theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that* all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians *be careful to maintain good works.* Or if by the phraſe of *believing in God*, we will underſtand an aſſent to all divine revelations, more eſpecially that of the goſpel, and the Chriſtian religion, the moſt perfect that ever God made of his will to mankind, the matter will come much to the ſame iſſue.

Be careful to maintain good works. This phraſe ſeems in the latter end of this epiſtle, to be uſed in a very reſtrained ſenſe; for labouring in an honeſt calling, ver. 14. *Let ours alſo learn to maintain good works for neceſſary uſes, that they be not unfruitful.* In the margin of your Bibles you will find it rendered, *to profeſs honeſt trades: Let ours alſo learn to profeſs honeſt trades for neceſſary uſes*, that is, for the ſupply of their neceſſities. But in the text it ſeems more agreeable to the ſcope of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe, to underſtand the phraſe of *maintaining good works*, for the practice of all Chriſtian virtues, eſpecially thoſe which are more uſeful and beneficial to human

human ſociety; among which diligence and induſtry in an honeſt calling, is none of the leaſt conſiderable, becauſe it follows, *theſe things are good and profitable unto men.* And indeed theſe are properly works of goodneſs, which redound to the public benefit and advantage.

But good works may well be taken in a larger ſenſe, for all ſorts of virtuous actions. And ſo it is certainly uſed ſeveral times in this epiſtle, chap. i. 16. *Unto every good work reprobate,* ſpeaking of all profligate perſons who were loſt to all virtue and goodneſs. Chap. ii. 7. *In all things ſhewing thyſelf a pattern of good works,* that is, an example of all kind of virtue. And chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, to obey magiſtrates, and to be ready to every good work;* that is, to the practice of all goodneſs, of whatſoever is honeſt and virtuous in itſelf, amiable and commendable in the ſight of others, uſeful and beneficial to any.

Having thus explained the words, I come now to conſider the two points contained in them.

Firſt, The certain truth and credibility of this ſaying or propoſition, That they which have believed in God, ought to be careful to maintain good works. *This is a faithful ſaying;* that is, a moſt evident and credible truth. And,

Secondly, The great fitneſs and neceſſity of inculcating this upon all Chriſtians, that the Chriſtian religion doth indiſpenſably require the virtues of a good life. *Theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly,* &c. I begin with the

Firſt of theſe points, *viz.* The certain truth and evident credibility of this ſaying or propoſition, *That they which have believed in God ſhould be careful to maintain good works. This is a faithful ſaying,* πιστὸς λόγος, *a ſaying worthy of credit, a moſt certain and credible truth.* And it will appear to be ſo, whether we conſider the great end and deſign of religion in general, or of the Chriſtian religion in particular.

I. If we conſider the great end and deſign of religion in general, which is to make us happy, by poſſeſſing our minds with the belief of a God, and thoſe other

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principles which have a neceſſary connection with that belief; and by obliging us to the obedience and practice of his laws.

1. By poſſeſſing our minds with the belief of a God, and of thoſe other principles which have a neceſſary connection with it. Such are the belief of the divine perfections, of the infinite goodneſs, and wiſdom, and power, and truth, and juſtice, and purity of the divine nature; a firm perſuaſion of his providence, that he governs and adminiſters the affairs of the world, and takes notice of the actions of men, and will call them to an account for them; of the immortality of our ſouls, and their endleſs duration after death, and conſequently of the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another life. Theſe are the great principles of natural religion, which mankind are in ſome meaſure poſſeſſed with, and perſuaded of, without any external revelation from God; and theſe are neceſſary and fundamental to religion, as the Apoſtle to the Hebrews declares, Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God;* that is, there can be no ſuch thing as the practice of religion, without the belief of the principles of it; and what theſe are, he tells us in the next words: *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

But then we muſt not reſt here, in the belief of a God and the principles of religion; for this faith is not required of us for itſelf, but in order to ſome farther end, which if it be not attained by us, the mere belief of the principles of religion is to no purpoſe, neither acceptable to God, nor uſeful and beneficial to ourſelves. God would not have imprinted the notion of himſelf upon our nature, he would not have diſcovered himſelf to us, nor have required of us the belief of his being and providence, merely that we might know there is ſuch a being as God in the world, who made us and governs us; but that this belief might have its proper influence upon us, to oblige us to the obedience of his laws, which are the proper cauſes and means of our happineſs. It will not avail us at all, nor is it in the leaſt acceptable to God, for men *to profeſs that they know him, when in works they deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and*

and to every good work reprobate, as the Apoſtle deſcribes ſome, chap. i. 16. And therefore,

2. The great end and deſign of religion is, that our minds being poſſeſſed and prepared by the principles of religion, the belief of theſe ſhould have its proper influence upon us, which is effectually to oblige us to the obedience and practice of God's laws. Now, the laws which God hath given us to live by, as they are the rule and meaſure of our duty, by the performance whereof only we can hope to gain the favour of God, ſo they are the proper directions and means in order to our happineſs; they teach us both the conditions of our happineſs; and the proper qualification and diſpoſition for it.

Obedience to the laws of God is the condition of our happineſs, both temporal and eternal, both in this world and the other. The promiſes which God hath made of temporal felicity and bleſſings, are upon condition of our obedience to his laws; it is *godlineſs only that hath the promiſe of this life, as well as of the other*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. A truth ſo certain and evident, that the Apoſtle thought fit to add that ſolemn ſeal to it, which he prefaceth to the ſaying in the text, *This is a faithful ſaying*. And though God be pleaſed out of his exceſſive goodneſs to beſtow many temporal bleſſings and favours upon every bad men, that by this *goodneſs of his he might lead them to repentance;* yet God never made any promiſe of temporal bleſſings to wicked men; but, on the contrary, hath threatened them with great temporal evils and calamities; but all the promiſes, even of temporal good things, are made to the obeying of God's laws; *to them that keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

And this is not only the condition upon which the promiſes of temporal bleſſings are ſuſpended, but generally, and for the moſt part, the natural cauſe and means of thoſe bleſſings; for there is no moral duty injoined by God, no virtue the practice whereof he requires from us, which does not naturally tend to our temporal felicity in this world; as temperance and chaſtity to that invaluable bleſſing of health, and to the preſervation of our eſtate, which is waſted by lewd and riotous living; humility and meekneſs to our quiet and ſafety;

ſafety; juſtice and integrity to our reputation and honour, one of the chief inſtruments of temporal proſperity and ſucceſs. Kindneſs and charity, and a readineſs *to do good to all men as we have opportunity*, are in their nature apt to recommend us exceedingly to the love and eſteem of all men, and to their favourable regard and aſſiſtance, when we ſtand in need of it. And ſo I might inſtance in all other virtues, the ſincere practice whereof, though it be not in all caſes certain and infallible, yet it is the beſt and wiſeſt courſe that any man can take, to attain the greateſt happineſs which this world can afford, and to avoid the greateſt miſeries and calamities of it: as, on the contrary, there is no vice, no wicked practice, but is naturally productive of ſome great temporal miſchief and inconvenience.

And then the practice of virtue and goodneſs, as it is the abſolute and indiſpenſable condition of our future happineſs, in another world, ſo is it the neceſſary and only proper qualification for it, and the certain and infallible means of attaining it.

It is an abſolute and indiſpenſable condition of attaining it; and without this, it is in vain to hope for it. As God will certainly puniſh the tranſgreſſors of his laws, ſo nothing but obedience to them can pretend to his rewards. This God hath moſt expreſsly declared, *that without purity and holineſs no man ſhall ſee him;* that *Chriſt is the author of eternal ſalvation only to them that obey him.* And if God had not declared this in his word, the conſideration of God's eſſential holineſs and juſtice would ſufficiently aſſure us of it.

But beſides this, in the very nature and reaſon of the thing, holineſs and goodneſs is the neceſſary and only proper qualification for happineſs. Without the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of God we cannot be happy, and holineſs and goodneſs can only qualify us for this. For happineſs is a ſtate which reſults from a temper and diſpoſition of mind ſuited to it; and where this is wanting, the man is no more capable of happineſs, than he that is ſick is of eaſe. Virtue and goodneſs are ſo eſſential to happineſs, that where theſe are not, there is no capacity of it. Theſe make us like to God, who is the fountain and pattern of all happineſs; and if we be not like to God,

God, we can have no enjoyment of him. And a wicked man, if he could ſteal into heaven, into the ſight and preſence of God, would, from the temper and diſpoſition of his own mind, ſo unſuitable to that holy place and company, be extremely miſerable, even in the manſions of the bleſſed. Such a temper of mind, ſuch a polluted and guilty conſcience, as a ſinner carries with him out of this world, will accompany him, and remain with him in the other; and guilt is always reſtleſs and full of torment; and though God ſhould not puniſh it with any poſitive infliction of pain, would of its own nature make a man for ever miſerable. So that it is a vain dream and imagination, that any man, without the practice of holineſs and virtue in this life, can be happy in the other. A ſincere and thorough repentance of all our ſins will indeed clear our conſciences of guilt, and by the mercy of God make us capable of happineſs; but it does this by changing our minds, and reconciling them to holineſs and goodneſs, in firm purpoſe and reſolution of a new life; and by changing our lives and actions too, if there be opportunity for it; but till this change be wrought, either in firm purpoſe, or in real effect, it is impoſſible we ſhould be happy. And though I will not deny, but this may be done by a deep repentance, and ſuch as God ſees would prove ſincere, in the laſt act of our lives; yet it is extreme madneſs, to run ſuch a hazard, becauſe we may be cut off from the opportunity of it; or if God ſhould afford us time and grace to that purpoſe, it is the hardeſt thing in the world to have any comfortable and well-grounded aſſurance of the ſincerity of it. So that very little hopes of heaven and happineſs can be given upon any other terms, than the general and conſtant courſe of a holy and virtuous life; and leaſt of all to thoſe who have all their life long reſolved to venture their everlaſting happineſs upon the infinite uncertainties of a deathbed-repentance at the laſt. But,

II. The truth of this propoſition, That *they which have believed in God, ſhould be careful to maintain good works*, or that faith and the virtues of a good life ought to go together; I ſay, the truth of this will yet be more evident, if we conſider the great end and deſign of

of the Chriſtian religion in particular, which was to reform the world, to purify the hearts and lives of men from corrupt affections and wicked practices, to teach men to excel in all kinds of virtue and goodneſs.

And this is every where in the New Teſtament moſt expreſsly declared. The great promiſe of bleſſedneſs is made to the virtues of meekneſs, and patience, and peaceableneſs, and purity, and righteouſneſs, as our Saviour expreſsly teacheth in that excellent ſermon of his upon the mount, which is the ſummary of the Chriſtian religion. Eph. iv. 17. 18. &c. *This I ſay therefore, and teſtify in the Lord, that ye henceforth,* that is, now that ye have embraced Chriſtianity, *walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart: who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over unto laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs. But ye have not ſo learned Chriſt: if ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus: that ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts: and be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind; and that ye put on that new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Wherefore putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members of one another. Be ye angry and ſin not; let not the ſun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying; that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another,* &c. So that you ſee, that unleſs there be an univerſal reformation of heart and life, we have *not ſo learned Chriſt as the truth is in Jeſus:* we do not rightly underſtand the goſpel, and the tendency of the Chriſtian religion.

Gal. v. 22. 23. 24. *But the fruits of the Spirit,* of that ſpirit which the Chriſtian religion endows men withal, *is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, fidelity, meekneſs, temperance; and they that are Chriſt's, have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts;* that is, they that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, are obliged to endeavour after all theſe virtues, and to put off the contrary luſts and vices. Phil. iv. 8. *Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.* St James likewiſe declares to the ſame purpoſe the genuine effect of Chriſtianity, which he calls *the knowledge and wiſdom which is from above:* Jam. iii. 12. 14. 15. 17. *Who is a wiſe man, and endowed with knowledge among you? let him ſhew out of a good converſation his works with meekneſs of wiſdom. But if you have bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not againſt the truth. This wiſdom deſcendeth not from above; but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh.* And *the wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.* To which I will add but one text more, which is the ſum and comprehenſion of all the reſt, and it is chap. ii. of this epiſtle to Titus, ver. 11. *The grace of God,* ſo he calls the doctrine of the goſpel, *the grace of God, which brings ſalvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.*

I might proceed particularly to ſhew, that the whole diſpenſation and doctrine of the goſpel, and all the parts of them, are calculated to raiſe and exalt human nature to the higheſt pitch and perfection of virtue and goodneſs, and effectually to reform the ſpirits and lives of men.

The diſpenſation of the goſpel, or the Chriſtian religion, conſiſts in God's merciful condeſcenſion to ſend his own and only Son in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. The doctrine of the goſpel conſiſts in the

the things to be believed; the duties to be practiſed by us; and the arguments and encouragements to the practice of thoſe duties. Now, I ſhall briefly ſhew, that the deſign of every part, both of the diſpenſation and doctrine of the goſpel, is to reform the minds and manners of men, and to engage them to the practice of all virtue and goodneſs. And,

I. For the diſpenſation of the goſpel, by which I mean the gracious method which the wiſdom of God hath pitched upon for the ſalvation and recovery of mankind, by ſending his only begotten Son into the world, in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. So that the principal parts of this diſpenſation are theſe three.

1. His incarnation, or appearing in our nature.

2. His life.

3. His death and ſufferings for us. And I ſhall ſhew that the great deſign of all this was to reform mankind, and make them better.

1. For his incarnation. The great deſign of his coming into the world, and appearing in our nature, was this; and this was the reaſon of the name Jeſus, given him at his birth, as the angel tells us: Matth. i. 21. *His name ſhall be called Jeſus, for he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.* Matth. ix. 13. he himſelf tells us, *that he came to call ſinners to repentance;* that is, to reclaim them to a better and more virtuous courſe of life; and chap. xviii. 11. *The Son of man is come to ſave that which was loſt,* that is, to recover mankind from a ſtate of ſin and miſery, to a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs. And St Peter, exhorting the Jews to repentance, uſeth this argument, that for this very end God ſent him among them: Acts iii. 26. *Unto you firſt God ſent him to bleſs you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity.* Heb. ix. 26. *But now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to aboliſh ſin,* that is, to deſtroy both the guilt and power of ſin. 1 John iii. 5. *Ye know that he was manifeſted to take away our ſins.* And ver. 8. *For this purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, to deſtroy the works of the devil.*

2. This likewiſe was the great deſign of his life, of his dwelling and converſing with us ſo long, to teach us by

his doctrine in all holineſs and virtue, and to give us the perfect pattern and example of it in his life. For his doctrine, I have ſpoke of that by itſelf: but beſides that, one principal end of his living among us, was, that in the courſe of his life, and all the actions of it, he might give us a perfect and familiar example of all holineſs and virtue, and therefore we are commanded to take him for our great pattern. *Learn of me,* ſaith he, *for I am meek and lowly of ſpirit,* Matth. xi. 29. John xiii. 15. after that great inſtance of his humility, in waſhing his diſciples feet, he adds, *For I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you.*

2. This alſo was the great deſign of his death and ſufferings. So the apoſtles every where teach: Gal. i. 4. ſpeaking of Chriſt, *Who gave himſelf for our ſins, that he might deliver us from this preſent evil world,* that is, that he might reſcue us from the vitious cuſtoms and practices of the world. 1 Pet. i. 18. *Foraſmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain converſation; but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot.* The death and ſufferings of Chriſt did not only make expiation for our ſins, but are propoſed to us as a pattern of mortification to ſin, and reſurrection to a new life, and a moſt powerful argument thereto. Rom. vi. 1. 2. 3. *&c.* and 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. ſpeaking of the love of Chriſt in laying down his life for us, *For the love of Chriſt,* ſaith he, *conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them.* From whence he infers, ver. 17. *Therefore if any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are paſſed away: behold, all things are become new.* And, ver. 21. *For he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him;* that is, he hath made him who was without ſin, a ſacrifice for our ſins, which ſhould be a ſtrong motive and argument to us, to endeavour after *the righteouſneſs of God.*

II. As the whole diſpenſation of the goſpel tends to this end, ſo more particularly does the doctrine of the goſpel,

goſpel, and every part of it, Now, the whole doctrine of the goſpel may be referred to theſe three heads.

1. The things to be believed by us.

2. The duties to be practiſed. And,

3. The arguments and encouragements to the practice of theſe duties. And all theſe have a moſt direct and proper tendency to reform mankind, and effectually to engage us to the practice of holineſs and virtue.

1. The matters of faith propoſed in the goſpel have a direct tendency to a good life, and immediate influence upon it. All the articles of our creed, and whatever the Chriſtian religion propoſeth to our belief concerning God the Father, the creator and governor of all things; and concerning Jeſus Chriſt our Lord and Saviour; and concerning the Holy Spirit of grace; the catholic church; the communion of ſaints; the reſurrection of the dead, and everlaſting life after death: all and each of theſe are ſo many arguments and reaſons, motives and encouragements to a good life. In general, our hearts are ſaid to be *purified by faith*, Acts xv. 9. 1 Tim. i. 5. Faith is there reckoned among the principal ſources and fountains of a good life: *The end of the commandment*, (the word is παραγγελίας), *the end of the goſpel-declaration is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned.* So that a ſincere faith is the great principle of charity, which is the *fulfilling of the law*, and comprehends in it the duties of both tables. And here I might particularly ſhew, what influence the ſeveral articles of the Chriſtian faith have upon the practice of holineſs and virtue in our lives; but this would be too large a field of diſcourſe; and the thing is very plain and obvious to every man's conſideration; and therefore I ſhall content myſelf with what I have ſaid in general concerning the influence of faith upon a good life.

2. The duties injoined by the Chriſtian religion do likewiſe tend more immediately to the ſame end and deſign; I mean the laws and precepts of the goſpel, which are nothing elſe but ſo many rules of good life, and in the main ſubſtance of them are the laws of nature cleared and perfected. *For Chriſt came not to deſtroy the law*, which was in force before; but to explain

and clear it, where, through the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, it was grown obſcure and doubtful, and to perfect it by ſuperadding ſome rules and precepts of greater goodneſs and perfection, than ſeem to have been injoined by it: as to abſtain from all kind of revenge, to love our enemies, and not only to be ready to forgive them the greateſt injuries they have done us, but to do them the greateſt good, and even to be perfectly reconciled to them after the higheſt provocations, whenever they are in a meet capacity and diſpoſition for it. So that the precepts of the Chriſtian religion are a plain and perfect rule of all virtue and goodneſs, and the beſt and moſt abſolute ſyſtem of moral philoſophy that ever was in the world, containing all the rules of virtue and a good life, which are ſcattered and diſperſed in the writings of the philoſophers, and the wiſe men of all ages, and delivering them to us with greater clearneſs and certainty; in a more ſimple and unaffected manner, with greater authority, force, and efficacy upon their minds, than any philoſopher and lawgiver ever did; teaching us how to worſhip God in the beſt manner, and moſt ſuitable to his nature and perfections; how to demean ourſelves towards others with all meekneſs and humility, juſtice and integrity, kindneſs and charity; and how to govern ourſelves and our own unruly appetites and paſſions, and to bring them within the bonds of reaſon, much better than any law or inſtitution that ever was in the world; and all theſe duties and virtues ſtrictly commanded and injoined in the name and authority of God, by one evidently impowered and commiſſioned by him, and ſent from heaven on purpoſe to inſtruct us in the nature and practice of them. So that the doctrine of the goſpel, in reſpect of the laws and precepts of it, is a plain and perfect rule of a good life. And then,

2. The Chriſtian religion contains the moſt powerful arguments and encouragements to this purpoſe: and theſe are the threatenings and promiſes of the goſpel.

(1.) The terrible threatenings of eternal miſery and puniſhments to all the workers of iniquity, and wilful and impenitent tranſgreſſors of theſe laws. And this is an argument which taketh the faſteſt and ſureſt hold upon

upon human nature, and will many times move and affect, when no other conſiderations will work upon us. Many men that could not be wrought upon by the love of God and goodneſs, nor by the hopes of everlaſting happineſs, have been affrighted and reclaimed from an evil courſe by the fear of hell and damnation, and the awe of a judgment to come. To think of lying under the terrible wrath and diſpleaſure of almighty God to eternal ages, of being extremely and for ever miſerable without intermiſſion and without end, muſt needs be a very diſmal conſideration to any man that can think and conſider: *For who knows the power of God's anger? who can dwell with everlaſting burnings?* And yet to this horrible danger, to this intolerable miſery, do all the workers of iniquity, every one that lives in the wilful contempt and diſobedience of the laws of the goſpel, expoſe themſelves; and this is as expreſsly revealed and declared to us, as it is poſſible for words to declare any thing: Matth. xiii. 40. 41. 42. *So ſhall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire; there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth.* Matth. xxv. 41. there you have the very ſentence recorded, which ſhall be pronounced upon ſinners at the great day: *Then ſhall the King ſay to them on his left hand,* that is, to the wicked, *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* And ver. 46. *Theſe ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment.* And this is that which, St Paul tells us, renders the doctrine of the goſpel ſo powerful for the converſion and ſalvation of ſinners: Rom. i. 16. *I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, becauſe it is the power of God to ſalvation, to every one that believeth.* And ver. 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* And chap. ii. 8. 9. *To them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.* Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words; for becauſe of theſe things,* viz. the ſins he had mentioned before, *cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience.* 2 Theſſ. i. 7. 8.

8. 9. *When the Lord Jeſus,* ſpeaking of the judgment of the great day, *ſhall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* So that the goſpel gives all imaginable diſcouragement to the tranſgreſſion and diſobedience of God's laws, by denunciation of the greateſt dread and terror that can be preſented to human nature, enough to make any ſenſible and conſiderate man willing to do or forbear any thing, to eſcape ſo horrible danger, *to cut off a foot or hand, or to pluck out an eye,* not only to reſtrain nature in any thing, but even to offer violence to it, *rather than to be caſt into hell-fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched,* as our Saviour expreſſeth it, Mark ix. 48. This is the firſt argument from the threatenings. The

2. Is from the promiſes of the goſpel, which are full encouragement to obedience; and there are three great promiſes made in the goſpel to repentance, and the obedience of God's laws.

1. The promiſe of pardon and forgiveneſs.

2. Of grace and aſſiſtance.

3. Of eternal life and happineſs. And theſe certainly contain all the encouragement we can deſire; that God will pardon what is paſt, aſſiſt us in well-doing for the future, and reward our perſeverance in it to the the end with eternal life; and all this is expreſsly promiſed to us in the goſpel.

1. The pardon and forgiveneſs of ſins paſt: Acts xiii. 38. 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins: and by him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which ye could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes.* And this is a great encouragement to amendment, to be fully indemnified from all paſt ſins and tranſgreſſions; and this promiſe is made to believing, which includes in it repentance and a better courſe.

2. The promiſe of grace and aſſiſtance, to enable us to all the purpoſes of holineſs and obedience. And this our Saviour hath moſt expreſsly and emphatically promiſed

miſed to all that are ſincerely reſolved to make uſe of it; and that upon the eaſieſt condition that can be, if we do but earneſtly pray to God for it, telling us that we may, with the ſame confidence and aſſurance of ſucceſs, (nay with much greater), aſk this of God, as we can any thing that is good, of the kindeſt father upon earth, Luke xi. 9. And ſurely here is a mighty encouragement to well-doing, to be aſſured that God is moſt ready to afford his grace and aſſiſtance to us to this purpoſe, if we heartily beg it of him. So that neither the conſideration of our own weakneſs, nor of the power of our ſpiritual enemies, can be any diſcouragement or juſt excuſe to us from doing our duty, ſince God offers us ſo freely all the ſtrength that we need, and to endue us with an inward principle of well-doing, more powerful and effectual to all the purpoſes of holineſs and virtue, than any oppoſition that can be raiſed againſt it. So St John aſſures us, that we have God on our ſide, and the powerful aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, and therefore are ſure of victory in this conflict: 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* If the Spirit of God be more powerful than the devil, we are of the ſtronger ſide; and we have no juſt cauſe to complain of our inability and weakneſs to do the will of God, ſince that ſtrength and aſſiſtance, which we may have for aſking, is to all effects and purpoſes of our own power. And therefore St Paul made no ſcruple to call it ſo, and to ſay, he was able to do all things: *I am able to do all things through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me.*

3. The promiſe of eternal life: and this is the great promiſe of the goſpel, and the crown of all the reſt: 1 John ii. 25. *This is the promiſe that he hath promiſed us, even eternal life.* And this is a reward ſo great and glorious, and ſo infinitely beyond the portion of our ſervice and obedience, that nothing can be more encouraging. What ſhould not men do *in hopes of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promiſed to us?* The expectation of ſuch a reward, ſo well aſſured to us, is ſufficient to encourage us to do our utmoſt, and to ſtrain all our powers for the ſecuring and attaining of it, which we

cannot

cannot do without holineſs and obedience of life; for *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* So that all the promiſes of the goſpel are to encourage and ſtrengthen us in well-doing, *to make us partakers of the divine nature,* that we ſhould *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God.*

Thus you ſee that the whole diſpenſation of the goſpel, and the doctrines of it, and every part of them, are all calculated to reform the minds and manners of men. This is the great deſign of the Chriſtian religion, and all the parts and powers of it, to clear, and confirm, and perfect the natural law, to reinforce the obligation of moral duties by ſevere threatenings, and greater promiſes, and to offer men more powerful grace and aſſiſtance to the practice of all goodneſs and virtue; and they do not underſtand the Chriſtian religion, who imagine any other end and deſign of it. There is nothing that our Saviour and his apoſtles do every where more vehemently declare, than that hearing and believing the doctrine of Chriſt ſignifies nothing, without the real virtues of a good life. *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead,* ſaith St James. For men to think that the mere belief of the goſpel, without the fruits and effects of a good life, will ſave them, is a very fond and vain imagination. And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken concerning the point.

SER-

SERMON CCVIII.

Of the neceſſity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. Theſe things are good and profitable unto men.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

FROM theſe words I have propoſed to handle theſe two points.

Firſt, The certain truth or credibility of this ſaying and propoſition, *That they which have believed in God, ought to be careful to maintain good works.* This I have ſpoken to, and come now to the

Second, The great fitneſs and neceſſity of inculcating frequently upon all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the practice of the virtues of a good life. In the handling of this point, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew the great fitneſs and neceſſity of preſſing upon people the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life. And,

Secondly, Anſwer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may ſeem liable. I begin with the

Firſt of theſe, *viz.* to ſhew the great fitneſs and neceſſity of inculcating and preſſing upon all Chriſtians the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life. And this will appear to be very fit and neceſſary upon theſe two accounts.

I. Becauſe men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, *viz.* the practice of real goodneſs.

II. Becauſe

II. Becauſe of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life and happineſs.

I. Becauſe men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, *viz.* the practice of real goodneſs. They are extremely deſirous to reconcile, if it be poſſible, the hopes of eternal happineſs in another world, with a liberty to live as they liſt in this preſent world; they are loath to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their luſts, and ſubduing and governing their paſſions, and bridling their tongues, and ordering their whole converſation aright, and practiſing all thoſe duties which are comprehended in thoſe two great commandments, the love of God and our neighbour. They would fain get into the favour of God, and *make their calling and election ſure*, by ſome eaſier way, than by giving *all diligence, to add to their faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindneſs, and charity*.

The plain truth of the matter is, men had rather religion ſhould be any thing, than what indeed it is; the thwarting and croſſing of our vitious inclinations, the curing of our evil and corrupt affections; the due care and government of our unruly appetites and paſſions, the ſincere endeavour and conſtant practice of all holineſs and virtue in our lives; and therefore they had much rather have ſomething that might handſomely palliate and excuſe their evil inclinations, than to extirpate them and cut them up; and rather than reform and amend their vitious lives, make God an honourable amends and compenſation for them in ſome other way.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and deſign of religion, and to thruſt it by, by ſubſtituting ſomething elſe in the place of it, which they hope may ſerve the turn as well, and which hath the appearance of as much devotion and reſpect, and perhaps of more coſt and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impoſe upon themſelves, and to pleaſe themſelves with a conceit of pleaſing God full as well, or better,

better, by ſome other way, than that which he hath pitched upon and appointed for them; not conſidering that *God is a great King*, and will be obſerved and obeyed by his creatures in his own way; and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him, than any other ſacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands; that he is infinitely wiſe and good, and therefore the laws and rules which he hath given us to live by, are more likely and certain means of our happineſs, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thus, I ſay, it hath been in all ages. The old world, after that general deluge which God ſent to puniſh the raging wickedneſs and impiety of men, by ſweeping all mankind from off the face of the earth, excepting only one family, which was ſaved to be the ſeminary of a new and better race of men; I ſay, after this, the world in a ſhort ſpace fell off from the worſhip of the true God to the worſhip of idols and falſe gods; being unwilling to bring themſelves to a conformity and likeneſs to the true God, they choſe falſe gods like themſelves, ſuch as might not only excuſe, but even countenance and abet their lewd and vitious practices.

And when God had made a new revelation of himſelf to the nation of the Jews, and given them the chief heads and ſubſtance of the natural law, written over again with his own finger in tables of ſtone, and many other laws concerning religious worſhip, and their civil converſation, ſuited and adapted to their preſent temper and condition; yet how ſoon did their religion degenerate into external obſervances, purifications, and waſhings, and a multitude of ſacrifices, without any great regard to the inward and ſubſtantial parts of religion, and the practice of thoſe moral duties and virtues, which were in the firſt place required of them, and without which all the reſt found no acceptance with God? Hence are thoſe frequent complaints in the prophets, that their religion was degenerated into form and ceremony, into oblations and ſacrifices, the obſervances of faſts, and ſabbaths, and new moons; but had no power and efficacy upon their hearts and lives; was wholly deſtitute of inward purity and holineſs, of

all ſubſtantial virtues, and the fruits of righteouſneſs in a good life. Thus God complains by the prophet Iſaiah, chap. i. 11. &c. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me? ſaith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations. Incenſe is an abomination unto me: the new moons and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting. Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well; ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: Though your ſins be as ſcarlet,* &c. Upon theſe terms, God declares himſelf ready to be reconciled to them, and to have mercy on them. But all their external ſervices and ſacrifices, ſeparated from real goodneſs and righteouſneſs, were ſo far from appeaſing God's wrath, that they did but increaſe the provocation. And to the ſame purpoſe, chap. lxvi. 2. 3. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man: he that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwines blood: he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed an idol. Yea, they have choſen their own ways, and their ſoul delighted in their abomination.* Jer. vi. 19. 20. *Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, becauſe they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpoſe cometh there to me incenſe from Sheba? and the ſweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your ſacrifices ſweet unto me.* They thought to pleaſe God with coſtly incenſe and ſacrifices, whilſt they rejected his law. And chap. vii. 4. 5. 6. *Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are theſe. For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppreſs not the ſtranger, the fatherleſs, and the widow, and ſhed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place.* And ver. 8. 9. 10. *Behold, ye truſt in lying words that*

that cannot profit. Will ye ſteal, murder, and commit adultery, and ſwear falſely, and burn incenſe unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and ſtand before me in this houſe, which is called by my name, and ſay, We are delivered to do all theſe abominations? This was to add impudence to all their other impieties; to think that the worſhip of God, and his holy temple, did excuſe theſe groſs crimes and immoralities. Micah vi. 6. 7. 8. there God repreſents the Jews, as deſirous to pleaſe God at any rate, provided their luſts and vices might be ſpared, and they might not be obliged to amend and reform their lives: *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, and with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* All this they would willingly do: but all this will not do without real virtue and goodneſs. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

And in the time of our bleſſed Saviour, thoſe who pretended to be moſt devout among the Jews, were wholly buſied about their pretended traditions of *waſhing of hands, and the outſides of their cups and diſhes,* and about the external *and leſſer things of the law, the tithing of mint, and anniſe, and cummin, and all manner of herbs, omitting,* in the mean time, *the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the love of God,* as our Saviour deſcribes their religion, Matth. xxiii. 23.

And after the clear revelation of the goſpel, the beſt and moſt perfect inſtitution that ever was, in the very beginning of Chriſtianity, what licentious doctrines did there creep in, *turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs,* and releaſing men from all moral duties, and the virtues of a good life? *by reaſon whereof the way of truth was evil ſpoken of,* as St Peter and St Jude expreſsly tell us concerning the ſect of the Gnoſtics. And St John likewiſe deſcribes the ſame ſect by their arrogant pretences to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, whilſt they *walked in darkneſs,* and allowed themſelves in

all manner of wickedneſs of life; they pretended to perfection and righteouſneſs, without keeping the commandments of God.

And in the next following age of Chriſtianity, how was it peſtered with a trifling controverſy about the time of the obſervation of Eaſter, and with endleſs diſputes and niceties about the doctrine of the Trinity, and the two natures and wills of Chriſt! by which means the practice of Chriſtianity was greatly neglected, and the main end and deſign of that excellent religion almoſt quite defeated and loſt.

After this, when the myſtery of iniquity began to ſhew itſelf, in the degeneracy of the Roman church from her primitive ſanctity and purity, and in the affectation of an undue and boundleſs power over other churches, the Chriſtian religion began to be over-run with ſuperſtition, and the primitive fervour of piety and devotion was turned into a fierce zeal and contention about matters of no moment and importance: of which we have a moſt remarkable inſtance here in our own nation, when Auſtin the monk arrived here to convert the nation, and preach the goſpel among us, as the church of Rome pretended; but againſt all faith and truth of hiſtory, which aſſures us that Chriſtianity was planted here among the Britons ſeveral ages before, and perhaps ſooner than even at Rome itſelf; and not only ſo, but had got conſiderable footing among the Saxons before Auſtin the monk ever ſet foot amongſt us: I ſay, when Auſtin the monk arrived here, the two great points of his Chriſtianity were, to bring the Britons to a conformity with the church of Rome in the time of Eaſter, and in the tonſure and ſhaving of the prieſts, after the manner of St Peter, as they pretended, upon the crown of the head, and not of St Paul, which was by ſhaving or cutting cloſe the hair of the whole head, as from ſome vain and fooliſh tradition he pretended to have learned: the promoting of theſe two cuſtoms was his great errand and buſineſs, and the zeal of his preaching was ſpent upon theſe two fundamental points; in which, after very barbarous and bloody doings, he at laſt prevailed. And this is *the converſion of England*, ſo much boaſted of by the church of Rome, and for which

which this Auſtin is magnified for ſo great a ſaint; when it is very evident from the hiſtory of thoſe times, that he was a proud, ignorant, turbulent, and cruel man, who, inſtead of firſt converting the nation to the faith of Chriſt, confounded the purity and ſimplicity of the Chriſtian religion, which had been planted and eſtabliſhed among us long before.

In latter ages, when the man of ſin was grown up to his full ſtature, the great buſineſs of religion was the Pope's abſolute and univerſal authority over all Chriſtians, even kings and princes, in order to ſpiritual matters; eccleſiaſtical liberties and immunities; and the exemption of the clergy, and all matters belonging to them, from the cogniſance of the ſecular power; the great points which Tho. a Becket contended ſo earneſtly for, calling it *the cauſe of Chriſt*, and in the maintenance whereof he perſiſted to the death, and was canonized as a ſaint and a martyr. And among the people, their piety conſiſted in the promoting of monkery, and founding and endowing monaſteries; in infinite ſuperſtitions, fooliſh doctrines, and more abſurd miracles to confirm them; in purchaſing indulgences with money, and hearing of maſſes for the redemption of ſouls out of purgatory; in the idolatrous worſhip of ſaints, and their relics and images, and eſpecially of the bleſſed Virgin, which at laſt grew to that height, as to make up the greateſt part of their worſhip and devotion, both public and private. And indeed they have brought matters to that abſurd paſs, that one may truly ſay, that the whole buſineſs of their devotion is to teach men to worſhip images, and images to worſhip God. For to be preſent at divine ſervice and prayers celebrated in an unknown tongue, is not the worſhip of men and reaſonable creatures, but of ſtatues and images, which though they be preſent in the place where this ſervice is performed, yet they bear no part in it, being void of all ſenſe and underſtanding of what is done. And indeed in their whole religion, ſuch as it is, they drive ſo ſtrict a bargain with God, and treat him in ſo arrogant a manner by their inſolent doctrine of the merit of good works, as if God were as much beholden to them for their ſervice and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of it, which

they challenge as of right and juſtice belonging to them. Nay, ſo high have they carried this doctrine, as to pretend not only to merit eternal life for themſelves, but to do a great deal more in works of ſupererogation, for the benefit and advantage of others; that is, when they have done as much as in ſtrict duty they are obliged to, and thereby paid down a valuable conſideration for heaven, and as much as in equal juſtice between God and man it is worth, the ſurpluſage of their good works they put as a debt upon God, and as ſo many bills of credit laid up in the treaſure of the church, which the Pope by his pardons and indulgences may diſpenſe and place to whoſe account he pleaſeth. And thus by one device or other they have enervated the Chriſtian religion to that degree, that it hath quite loſt its virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men; and inſtead of the fruits of real goodneſs and righteouſneſs, it produceth little elſe but ſuperſtition and folly; or if it bring forth any fruits of charity, it is either ſo miſplaced upon theſe chimeras, (as hiring of prieſts to ſay ſo many maſſes for the dead, to redeem their ſouls out of purgatory), that it ſignifies nothing; or elſe the virtue of it is ſpoiled by the arrogant pretence of meriting by it. So apt have men always been to deceive themſelves by an affected miſtake of any thing for religion, but that which really and in truth is ſo. And this is that which the Apoſtle St Paul foretold would be the great miſcarriage of the laſt times, that under a great pretence of religion men ſhould be deſtitute of all goodneſs, and abandoned to all wickedneſs and vice, *having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power of it,* 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And though things have been much better ſince that happy reformation from the corruptions and errors of Popery, yet even among Proteſtants the malice and craft of the devil hath prevailed ſo far, as to undermine, in a great meaſure, the neceſſity of a good life, by thoſe luſcious doctrines of the Antinomians, concerning free grace, and the juſtification of a ſinner, merely upon a confident perſuaſion of his being in a ſtate of grace and favour with God, and conſequently that the goſpel diſchargeth men from obedience to the laws of God, and all manner of obligation to the virtues of a good life; which doctrines,

doctrines, how falſe and abſurd ſoever in themſelves, and pernicious in their conſequences, did not only prevail very much in Germany, a little after the beginning of the reformation, but have ſince got too much footing in other places, and been too far entertained and cheriſhed by ſome good men, who were not ſufficiently aware of the error and danger of them. But bleſſed be God, the doctrine of our church, both in the articles and homilies of it, hath been preſerved pure and free from all error and corruption in this matter on either hand, aſſerting the neceſſity of good works, and yet renouncing the merit of them in that arrogant ſenſe in which the church of Rome does teach and aſſert it; and ſo teaching juſtification by faith, and the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, as to maintain the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life.

And thus I have done with the firſt reaſon, why it is ſo fit and neceſſary to preſs frequently upon Chriſtians the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life, *viz.* becauſe men are and have ever been ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, *viz.* the practice of real goodneſs. I ſhall be brief upon the IId reaſon, namely, becauſe of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life. And this added to the former, makes the reaſon full and ſtrong. For if men be ſo apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and to be deceived in it be a matter of ſuch dangerous conſequence, then it is highly neceſſary to inculcate this frequently upon Chriſtians, that no man may be miſtaken in a matter of ſo much danger, and upon which his eternal happineſs depends. Now, if obedience to the laws of God, and the practice of virtue and good works, be neceſſary to our continuance in a ſtate of grace and favour with God, and to our final juſtification by our abſolution at the great day; if nothing but holineſs and obedience can qualify us for the bleſſed ſight of God, and the glorious reward of eternal happineſs; then it is matter of infinite conſequence to us, not to be miſtaken in a matter of ſo great importance; but that we *work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence*

ligence to make our calling and election ſure, by adding to our faith and knowledge, the virtues of a good life; that, by patient continuance in well-doing, we ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life: and that we ſo demean ourſelves *in all holy converſation and godlineſs*, as that we may with comfort and confidence *wait for the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* That this is indiſpenſably neceſſary to our happineſs, I have in my former diſcourſe ſhewed at large, from the great end and deſign of religion in general, and of the Chriſtian religion in particular; from the whole deſign and doctrine of the goſpel; from the conſtant tenor of the Bible; and from the nature and reaſon of the thing.

I know it hath been the great deſign of the devil and his inſtruments, in all ages, to undermine religion, by making an unhappy ſeparation and divorce between godlineſs and morality, between faith and the virtues of a good life, and by this means not only to weaken and abate, but even wholly to deſtroy the force and efficacy of the Chriſtian religion, and to leave men as much under the power of the devil and their luſts, as if there were no ſuch thing as Chriſtianity in the world. But let us not deceive ourſelves; this was always religion, and the condition of our acceptance with God, to endeavour to be like God in purity and holineſs, in juſtice and righteouſneſs, in mercy and goodneſs, *to ceaſe to do evil, and to learn to do well.* And this you will find to be the conſtant doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted?* Pſal. xv. 1. 2. *Lord, who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle? who ſhall dwell upon thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth from his heart.* Pſal. l. 23. *To him that ordereth his converſation aright, will I ſhew the ſalvation of God.* Iſ. i. 16. 17. 18. *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed,*

God, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord, Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow. Iſ. iii. 10. 11. *Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with him: for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him.* Micah vi. 8. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

And our bleſſed Saviour, in his ſermon upon the mount, tells us plainly what manner of perſons we muſt be, if ever we hope to be happy, and to enter into the kingdom of God; and wherein his religion conſiſts, in righteouſneſs, and purity, and meekneſs, and patience, and peaceableneſs; and declares moſt expreſsly, that if we hope for happineſs upon any other terms than the practice of theſe virtues, *we build upon the ſand.* Acts x. 34. *Of a truth I perceive,* ſays St Peter there, *that God is no reſpecter of perſons; but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* Gal. vi. 7. 8. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap. For he that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the ſpirit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting.* Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience.* 1 John iii. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous.* And here in the text, *This is a faithful ſaying,* &c. *Theſe things are good and profitable to men,* acceptable to God, and honourable to religion, and the only way and means to eternal life, through the mercy and merits of Jeſus Chriſt our bleſſed Lord and Saviour.

SER-

SERMON CCIX.

Of the neceſſity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. Theſe things are good and profitable unto men.

The third ſermon on this text.

I Come now to the ſecond thing I propoſed, which was to anſwer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may ſeem liable.

Firſt, That this is to advance and ſet up morality.

Secondly, That this ſeems to contradict St Paul's doctrine of *juſtification by the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, and by faith without the works of the law.* I ſhall endeavour to anſwer both theſe.

Firſt, That this is to advance and ſet up morality. To which I anſwer two things.

I. That if by morality men mean counterfeit virtue, and the ſpecious ſhew of juſtice, and charity, and meekneſs, or any other virtue, without the truth and reality of them, without an inward principle of love to God and goodneſs, out of oſtentation and vain-glory, or for ſome other by and ſiniſter end, ſuch as probably were the virtues of many Heathens, and it is to be feared of too many Chriſtians; if this be that which the objectors mean by morality, then we do aſſure them that we preach up no ſuch morality, but thoſe virtues only which are ſincere, and ſubſtantial, and real, the principle and root whereof is the love of God and goodneſs, and the end, the honour and glory of God, and a neceſſary ingredient whereof is ſincerity and truth. It is *righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, the ſincere love of God and our

our neighbour, real meekneſs, and patience, and humility, and ſobriety, and chaſtity, and not the glittering ſhew and appearance, the vain and affected oſtentation of any of theſe virtues, which we perſuade and preſs men ſo earneſtly to endeavour after.

Not that I believe that all virtues of the Heathen were counterfeit and deſtitute of an inward principle of goodneſs: God forbid that we ſhould paſs ſo hard a judgment upon thoſe excellent men, Socrates, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, and ſeveral others, who ſincerely endeavoured to live up to the light and law of nature, and took ſo much pains to cultivate and raiſe their minds, to govern and ſubdue the irregularity of their ſenſual appetites and brutiſh paſſions, to purify and refine their manners, and to excel in all virtue and goodneſs. Theſe were glorious lights in thoſe dark times, and ſo much the better for being good under ſo many diſadvantages, as the ignorance and prejudice of their education, the multitude of evil examples continually in their view, and the powerful temptation of the contrary cuſtoms and faſhions of the generality of mankind.

Nor were they wholly deſtitute of an inward principle of goodneſs; for though they had not that powerful grace and aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit which is promiſed and afforded to all ſincere Chriſtians, (as neither had the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and in covenant with him), yet it is very credible, that ſuch perſons were under a ſpecial care and providence of God, and not wholly deſtitute of divine aſſiſtance, no more than Job and his friends, mentioned in the Old Teſtament, and Cornelius in the New, who ſurely were very good men, and accepted of God, though they were Gentiles, and *aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenant of promiſe;* but yet not excluded from the bleſſing of the Meſſias, though they were ignorant of him, as many of the Jews likewiſe were, nor from the benefit of that great propitiation, which *in the fulneſs of time* he was to make for the ſins of the whole world

So that there is no need ſo uncharitably to conclude, (as ſome of the ancients have done, not all, nor the moſt ancient of them neither), that there were no good men

men among the Heathen, and that the brighteſt of their virtues were counterfeit, and only in ſhew and appearance. For there might be ſeveral good men among the Gentiles, in the ſame condition that Cornelius was before he became a Chriſtian: of whom it is ſaid, whilſt he was yet a Gentile, that *he was a devout man, and feared God*, and *that his prayer and his alms were accepted of God*, a certain ſign that they were not counterfeit. And if he had died in that condition, before Chriſt had been revealed to him, I do not ſee what reaſonable cauſe of doubt there can be concerning his ſalvation; and yet it is a moſt certain and inviolable truth, that *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved, but the name of Jeſus; neither is there ſalvation in any other.* And good men in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world, both before the law, and under the law, and without the law, ſuch as *feared God and wrought righteouſneſs*, were accepted of him *in that name*, and by the meritorious ſacrifice of *that Lamb of God*, which, in reſpect of the virtue and efficacy of it, is ſaid to have been *ſlain from the foundation of the world.*

II. But if by moral virtues be meant thoſe which concern the manners of men, from whence they ſeem to have taken their name, and which are in truth the duties commanded and injoined by the natural or moral law, and are comprehended under thoſe two great commands, as our bleſſed Saviour calls them, *the love of God and our neighbour;* I ſay, if this be the meaning of it, then we do advance this kind of morality, as that which is the primary and ſubſtantial part of all religion, and moſt ſtrictly injoined by the Chriſtian. To which purpoſe our Saviour tells us, Matth. v. 17. that *he was not come to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.* And ver. 19. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall break one of the leaſt of theſe commandments, and teach men ſo, ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven; but whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven;* that is, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel. So that this is a principal part of the Chriſtian religion, to teach and practiſe the duties of the moral law. This the Phariſees were defective in, placing their religion in external and little things, but neglecting the great

great duties of morality, *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, and judgment, and fidelity, and the love of God.* And therefore he adds, ver. 20. *I ſay unto you, Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It is not poſſible in more expreſs and emphatical words to injoin the obſervation of the duties of the moral law. And then for that great principle and rule of moral juſtice, *To do to all men, as we would have them to do to us;* our Saviour injoins it as an eſſential part of religion, and the ſum and ſubſtance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the particular precepts contained in the law and the prophets, Matth. vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* And St Paul moſt expreſsly declares, that he was ſo far from weakening or making void the obligation of the law by his doctrine of *juſtification by faith*, that he did thereby confirm and eſtabliſh it: Rom. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we eſtabliſh the law.*

So that moral duties and virtues are the ſame with Chriſtian graces, and with that holineſs and righteouſneſs which the goſpel requires, and differ only in name and notion. They are called virtues, with relation to the intrinſical nature and goodneſs of them; and graces, with reſpect to the principle from which they flow, being the fruits and effects of the gracious operation of the Spirit of God upon our minds. And it hath been a very ill ſervice to religion, to decry morality, as ſome have done, not conſidering that moral duties are of primary obligation, and bound upon us by the law of nature; and that Chriſtianity hath reinforced and ſeconded the obligation of them by more powerful motives and encouragements. But I proceed to the

Second objection, *viz.* That this diſcourſe ſeems to be contrary to St Paul's doctrine of *juſtification by the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, by faith, without the works of the law.*

To which I anſwer, that St Paul, when he does ſo vehemently and frequently aſſert *juſtification by the free grace of God, and by faith, without the works of the law,*

does not thereby exclude the neceſſity of works of righteouſneſs and obedience to the moral precepts of the goſpel, as the condition of our continuance in the favour of God, and of our final and perfect juſtification and abſolution by the ſentence of the great day; but, on the contrary, does every where declare the neceſſity of a holy and virtuous life to this purpoſe. And this is moſt plainly the tenor and current of his doctrine throughout all his epiſtles. But whenever he contends that *we are juſtified by faith without works*, he denies one of theſe three things:

1. That the obſervation of the law of Moſes is neceſſary to our juſtification and ſalvation. And this he does in oppoſition to thoſe who troubled the Chriſtian church, by teaching, that it was ſtill neceſſary to Chriſtians to keep the law of Moſes; and that unleſs they did ſo, they could not be ſaved; of which we have a full account given, Acts xv. And this for the moſt part is the meaning of that aſſertion, ſo frequent in his epiſtles to the Romans and the Galatians, that *we are not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Chriſt*. And this is very evident from the tenor of his reaſoning about this matter, in which he does ſo frequently urge this argument, and inſiſt ſo ſtrongly upon it, *viz.* That men were juſtified before the law of Moſes was given, for which he inſtances in Abraham, and therefore the obſervance of that law cannot be neceſſary to a man's juſtification and ſalvation.

2. Sometimes he, in his diſcourſe upon this argument, denies the merit of any works of obedience and righteouſneſs to gain the favour and acceptance of God; ſo that we cannot challenge any thing of God as of debt, and as *a ground of boaſting*, but we owe all to the free grace and mercy of God; and when we have done our beſt, have done but our duty. And this he likewiſe frequently inſiſts upon in his epiſtle to the Romans, in oppoſition to an arrogant opinion, common among the Jews, of the merit of good works, and that God was indebted to them for their obedience. In this ſenſe he ſays, Rom. iv. 4. *Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt;* that is, he that claims juſtification, and the reward of eternal life, as due to him for

his

his obedience, does not aſcribe it to the free grace of God, but challengeth it as a debt due to him.

2. Sometimes he denies the neceſſity of any works of righteouſneſs, antecedently to our firſt juſtification, and being received into a ſtate of grace and favour with God; and aſſerts on the contrary, that by the faith of Chriſt, and ſincerely embracing the Chriſtian religion, men are juſtified: and though they were never ſo great ſinners before, all their paſt ſins are forgiven, and God is perfectly reconciled to them. In which ſenſe he ſays, chap. iv. 5. *That God juſtifies the ungodly* upon their *believing*. So that whatever ſins they were guilty of before, and though they never did any one good action in their lives, yet if they ſincerely embrace the Chriſtian religion, and thereby engage themſelves to reform their lives, and to obey the precepts of the goſpel for the future, God will thereupon receive them into his favour, and pardon the ſins of their former lives. And in this epiſtle to Titus, chap. iii. 5. 7. immediately before the text, *Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt; that being juſtified by his grace, we ſhould be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*; that is, though their former life had been very bad, as he deſcribes it before, ver. 3. *For we ourſelves were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in malice, and envy, and hatred of one another*); I ſay, notwithſtanding this, though they had done no works of righteouſneſs, but the contrary, yet upon their ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity at their baptiſm, and declaration of their repentance and engagements to live better, they were *juſtified freely by God's grace, and ſaved by his mercy*. But then he does not ſay, that, after this ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity, works of righteouſneſs were not neceſſary, to continue them in this ſtate of grace and favour with God; but quite contrary; he plainly declares the neceſſity of them in the very next words: *This is a faithful ſaying*, &c.

And the conſideration of this will fully reconcile the ſeeming difference between St Paul and St James, in this matter of juſtification. St Paul affirms, that a ſin-

ner is at firſt juſtified, and received into the favour of God, by a ſincere profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith, without any works of righteouſneſs preceding. St James affirms, that no man continues in a juſtified ſtate, and in favour with God, whoſe faith doth not bring forth good works; and that it is not a true and lively faith, which doth not approve and ſhew itſelf to be ſo, by the works of obedience and a good life: James ii. 14. *What doth it profit a man, my brethren, if a man ſay that he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith ſave him?* And ver. 17. *Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* And ver. 20. he repeats it again, *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.* And ver. 22. ſpeaking of Abraham, *Seeſt thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.* And ver. 26. *For as the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo.* The ſum and reſult of all which is this, that though we be juſtified at firſt by faith without works preceding, yet faith, without good works following it, will not finally juſtify and ſave us; nay indeed, that faith which does not bring forth the fruits of a good life, was never a true, and living, and perfect faith; but pretended, and dead, and imperfect, and therefore can juſtify no man; and he that hath only ſuch a faith, does but make an empty and ineffectual profeſſion, but is really deſtitute of the true faith of the goſpel.

And this is agreeable to that explication which was given by our firſt reformers here in England, of the nature of *juſtifying faith*; "That it is not a mere perſuaſion of the truths of natural and revealed religion, "but ſuch a belief as begets a ſubmiſſion to the will of "God, and hath hope, love, and obedience to God's "commandments joined to it. That this is the faith "which in baptiſm is profeſſed, from which Chriſtians "are called *the faithful*; and that in thoſe ſcriptures, "where it is ſaid, *We are juſtified by faith*, we may not "think that we be juſtified by faith, as it is a ſeparate "virtue from hope and charity, the fear of God, and "repentance, but by it is meant faith, neither only "nor alone, but with the aforeſaid virtues, containing "an engagement of obedience to the whole doctrine and "religion of Chriſt. And that although all that are juſtified,

" ſtified, muſt of neceſſity have charity, as well as faith; " yet neither faith nor charity are the worthineſs and " merit of our juſtification, but that is to be aſcribed " only to our Saviour Chriſt, who was *offered upon the* " *croſs for our ſins, and roſe again for our juſtification;*" as may be ſeen more at large in a treatiſe publiſhed at the beginning of our reformation, upon this and ſome other points. And I do not ſee what can be ſaid upon this point with more clearneſs and weight.

All the application I ſhall make of this diſcourſe ſhall be briefly this; that if we be convinced of the neceſſity of the virtues of a good life to all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, we would ſeriouſly and in good earneſt ſet about the practice of them; if *this be a faithful ſaying*, then I am ſure it greatly concerns us to be careful of our lives and actions, and that *our converſation be as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt;* becauſe if this be true, there is no poſſible way to reconcile a wicked life, no, nor a wilful neglect and violation of any of the duties and laws of Chriſtianity, with the hopes of heaven and eternal life. In this the ſcripture is poſitive and peremptory, that *every man that hath this hope in him*, muſt *purify himſelf, even as he is pure:* that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* but *if we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end ſhall be everlaſting life.*

And here I might particularly recommend, to your careful practice, the great virtues of Chriſtianity; thoſe which St Paul tells us are the proper and genuine *fruits of the ſpirit of* Chriſt, *love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, fidelity, meekneſs, temperance.* But I have not time to inſiſt particularly upon them. I ſhall content myſelf briefly to mention thoſe duties which the Apoſtle in this epiſtle doth more eſpecially preſs upon the ſeveral conditions and relations of men. Thoſe who are teachers and inſtructors of others, that they would not only be careful *to preach ſound doctrine*, but *in all things to ſhew themſelves patterns of good works.* Thoſe who are ſubject to others, and under their government, that they would pay all duty and obedience to their ſuperiors, as children to their parents, ſervants to their maſters, that they may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, chap.

ii. ver. 10. And ſo likewiſe thoſe who are ſubjects, that they live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magiſtrates. This our Apoſtle ſpeaks of as a great duty of Chriſtian religion, and reckons it among *good works*, chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, and to obey magiſtrates, and to be ready to every good work.*

And then thoſe who are of an inferior condition, that they labour and be diligent in the work of an honeſt calling, for this is privately *good and profitable unto men*, and to their families; and thoſe who are above this neceſſity, and are in a better capacity *to maintain good works* properly ſo called, works of piety, and charity, and juſtice; that they be careful to promote and advance them, according to their power and opportunity, becauſe theſe things are publicly *good and beneficial to mankind.* And beſides this, as St Peter exhorts, 2 Pet. i. 5. 6. *&c. And beſides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godlineſs; and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity. For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you that you ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But he that lacketh theſe things is blind, and cannot ſee afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old ſins;* that is, doth not conſider that the deſign of Chriſtianity is to renew and reform the hearts and lives of men. *Wherefore the rather, brethren,* as he goes on, *give diligence to make your calling and election ſure; for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

I will conclude all with that excellent ſaying of St Paul in this epiſtle to Titus, which ſo fully declares to us the great deſign, and the proper efficacy of the Chriſtian doctrine upon the minds and manners of men; chap. ii. 11. 12. 13. *For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for*

that

that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON CCX.

Of doing all to the glory of God.

1 COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

THese words are a general conclusion inferred from a particular case, which the Apostle had been discoursing of before; and that we may the better understand the meaning of this general rule, it will not be amiss to look back a little upon the particular case the Apostle was speaking of; and that was concerning *the partaking of things offered to idols*, and that in two cases; either by partaking of the idol-feasts in their temples, after the sacrifices; or by partaking of things offered to idols, whether they were bought by Christians in the market, or set before them at a private entertainment, to which by some Heathens they were invited.

The first he condemns as absolutely unlawful: the other not as unlawful in itself, but in some circumstances upon the account of scandal.

The first case he speaks of from ver. 14. to 22. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry. I speak to wise men: judge ye what I say.* As if he had said, You may easily apprehend what it is I am going to caution you against. And first he tells them in general, that they who communicated in the worship of any deity, or in any kind of sacrifice offered to him, did, in so doing,

doing, own and acknowledge that for a deity. To this purpose he instanceth in communicating in the Christian sacrament, and in the Jewish sacrifices: ver. 16. 17. 18. *The cup of the blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh:* that is, the Jews: *are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* Thus it is in the Christian and the Jewish worship. And the case is the same, if any man partake of the idol-feasts in their temples. This he does not express, but takes it for granted they understood what this discourse aimed at.

And then he answers an argument, which it seems was made use of by some, particularly the Gnostics, of whom the Apostle speaks, chap. viii. and that was this. If an idol be nothing, and consequently things sacrificed to idols were not to be considered as sacrifices, then it was lawful to partake of the idol-feasts, which were celebrated in their temples. And that the Apostle speaks of these, is plain from his discourse against the Gnostics, who made use of this argument for the lawfulness of communicating at the idol-feasts: chap. viii. 4. *As concerning therefore the eating of things which are offered in sacrifice unto idols; we know that an idol is nothing in the world,* &c. And ver. 10. *If any man see thee which hast knowledge,* alluding to the very name of Gnostics, *if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in an idol-temple.*

This then is that partaking of idol-feasts, which the Apostle here speaks of, which they pretended to be lawful, because *an idol is nothing.* This, says the Apostle, I know as well as you, that an idol is no real deity; but for all that, the devil is really worshipped and served by this means: ver. 20. *But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils.*

Having

Having declared this way of partaking of things offered to idols, to be unlawful in itself, and a virtual renouncing of Christianity; then he proceeds to the consideration of the other case, of eating of things offered to idols out of their temples, which might happen several ways. Sometimes being sold by the priests, they were exposed to sale in the market. Sometimes the Heathens carried some remainders of the sacrifices to their houses, and inviting the Christians to a feast, might set these meats before them; what should Christians do in either of these cases?

First, He determines in general, that out of the temples it was lawful to eat these things, because in so doing they communicated in no act of worship with the Heathens: it is lawful, he says, in itself; but because it might be harmful to others, and give scandal, in such circumstances, it became unlawful by accident: Ver. 23. *All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* Things which are lawful in themselves, may in some cases be very dangerous and destructive to others; and we should not only consider ourselves, but others also. *Let no man seek his own; but every man another's welfare.* And then he comes to the particular cases. *Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* We may take these things from God's hand, who is the true Lord of them and of all creatures. For this reason we may without scrupulous inquiry use those meats which are publicly exposed to sale.

And so likewise in the other case, if we be invited to the table of an Heathen, we may eat what is set before us, without inquiring whether it be part of an idol-sacrifice. But if any man tell us, that this meat was offered in sacrifice to idols, in that case we ought to abstain from eating of it, *for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake;* that is, out of regard to the opinion of those who think these meats unlawful: *for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* Also in another sense, God hath made such abundant provision for us, that we may abstain from this or that meat without any

great

great inconvenience. *Conscience, I say, not thine own but another's.* He had said before, we should *eat of what was set before us, asking no question for conscience sake;* that is, not making it a matter of conscience to ourselves: now he says, if we be told it was offered to an idol, we should *not eat for conscience sake;* that is, not as making a matter of conscience of it to ourselves, but out of regard to *the conscience of another,* to whom it might be a scandal. *For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? and if I with thanksgiving be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?* that is, why should another man's conscience be a prejudice to my liberty? if another makes conscience of it as unlawful, why should his conscience govern mine, and make me think so too; or why should I be evil spoken of, for thinking it lawful to eat any thing set before me for which I give thanks? This is a little obscure; but the plain meaning of the Apostle's reasoning seems to be this: Though I have that regard to another man's weak conscience, as to abstain from eating what he thinks unlawful; yet am I not therefore bound to be of his opinion, and think it unlawful in itself: I will consider his weakness so far as to forbear that which I am persuaded is lawful to do, but yet I will still preserve the liberty of my own judgment; and as I am content to give no scandal to him, so I expect that he should not censure and condemn me for thinking that lawful, which he believes not to be so. And then from all this discourse, the Apostle establisheth this general rule in the text, *Wherefore whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* To which is parallel that other text, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *That God in all things may be glorified.* So that this general rule lays a duty upon all Christians of designing the glory of God in all their actions; all the difficulty is, what is here meant by this, of *doing all things to the glory of God.* The Jews have a common saying, which seems to be parallel with this phrase of the Apostle, *That all things should be done in the name of God.* And this they make so essential to every good action, that it was a received principle among them, that he who obeys any command of God, and not *in his name,* shall receive no reward.

vard. Now, that to do things *in the name of God*, and to o them *to his glory*, are but several phrases signifying he same thing, is evident from that precept of the A-ostle, Col. iii. 17. *And whatsoever ye do in word, or in leed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*; that s, *to his glory*. Now, for our clear understanding of the ense of this phrase, of *glorifying God*, or *doing things to God's glory*; we will consider the various use of it in scripture, and so descend to the proper and particular sense of it here in the text.

The glory of God is nothing else but the honour which s given to him by his creatures; and consequently, he general notion of *glorifying God, or doing any thing o his glory*, is to design to honour God by such and uch actions; and this phrase is in scripture more especially applied to these following particulars.

I. We are said in scripture to glorify God by a solemn acknowledgment of him and his perfections, of his goodness and mercy, of his power and wisdom, of his truth and faithfulness, of his sovereign dominion and uthority over us. Hence it is that all solemn actions f religion are called the worship of God, which signifies that honour and glory which is given to him by his reatures, signified by some outward expression of reverence and respect. Thus we are said to worship God, when we fall down before him, and pray to him for nercy and blessings, or praise him for favours and benefits received from him, or perform any other solemn act of religion: Psal. lxxxvi. 9. *All nations whom thou hast nade, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and hall glorify thy name.*

But especially the duty of praise and thanksgiving is nost frequently in scripture called *glorifying of God, or iving glory to him*: Psal. lxxxvi. 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify thy name.* Matth. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they nay see your good works, and glorify your Father which is n heaven*; that is, praise him upon that account. Luke v. 25. it is said of the man sick of the palsy, that when he was healed, *he departed to his own house, glorifying God*; that is, praising God for his great mercy to him. And Luke xvii. 18. our Saviour speaking of *the ten lepers*

pers that were healed, says, that *but one of them return to give glory to God;* that is, to return thanks to G for his recovery.

II. Men are said in scripture to give glory to G by the acknowledgment of their sins, and repentan of them: Josh. vii. 19. *And Joshua said to Achan, M son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confe sion to him.* In like manner the Prophet Jeremiah, e horting the people to repentance, useth this expressio Jer. xiii. 16. *Give glory to the Lord your God, before causeth darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the da mountains.* And Rev. xvi. 9. it is said, that those upo whom great plagues fell, *repented not to give God glor* We glorify God by confession of our sins, and repentanc because in so doing we acknowledge his authority, and th holiness of those righteous laws which we have broken.

III. We are said likewise in scripture, to glorify Go by our holiness and obedience. Thus we are comman ed *to glorify God* by the chastity of our bodies, and th purity of our minds: 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Glorify God in you body, and in your spirit, which are his.* Thus our Savi our is said to have glorified God in the world, by his per fect obedience to his will: John xvii. 4. *Father, I hav glorified thee upon earth.* And thus he tells us we ma glorify God, by the fruits of holiness and obedience i our lives: John xv. 8. *Herein is my Father glorified if ye bring forth much fruit.* So likewise St Paul pray for the Philippians, that they may be *filled with the fruit of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glor and praise of God.*

IV. We are said likewise in an especial manner, *t glorify God* by our sufferings for his cause and truth John xxi. 19. our Saviour foretelling St Peter's mar tyrdom, expresseth it by this phrase of glorifying Go by his death, *This spake he, signifying by what death h should glorify God.*

V. And lastly, And because religion is the solemn honour, and public owning and acknowledgment o the Deity; hence it is that in scripture we are said *t glorify God* in a peculiar and eminent manner, when in all our actions we consult the honour and advantage of religion. Upon this account St Peter exhorts the mi-

nisters

niſters of the goſpel, ſo to preach to the people, and ſo to perform the public offices of religion, as may be for the honour of religion; and this he calls glorifying of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man ſpeak, let him ſpeak as the oracles of God; if any man miniſter, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified.* And becauſe the peace and unity of Chriſtians is ſo very much for the honour and advantage of religion, therefore we are ſaid in an eſpecial manner to glorify God, by maintaining the peace and unity of the church: Rom. xv. 5. 6. *Now the God of patience and conſolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And here in the text, we are ſaid *to do all things to the glory of God*, when in all our actions we have a regard to the promoting and advancing of religion and the edification of Chriſtians. For here by *eating and drinking to the glory of God*, the Apoſtle plainly means, that when things offered to idols are ſet before us, we ſhould refrain from them, when, by our eating, the intereſt of religion, and the edification of Chriſtians, may receive any prejudice; that is, when our eating may be *a ſcandal* to others; that is, *a ſtumbling block*, or *an occaſion of falling into ſin.* And that this is the Apoſtle's meaning, is evident from ver. 22. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient,* ὐ πάντα συμφέρει, *all things profit not; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not;* that is, though I know it is a thing very lawful in itſelf, to eat things which have been offered to idols, if they be bought in the market, or accidentally ſet before me at a feaſt; yet in ſome circumſtances it may not be for the advantage of religion, and be ſo far from edifying, that it may be an occaſion of ſin to them. For inſtance, I am invited to a feaſt, where things offered to idols are ſet before me, and one ſays, *this was offered in ſacrifice unto idols*, a ſufficient intimation to me that he thinks it unlawful; and therefore I will forbear, becauſe of the inconvenience to religion, and the manifold ſcandal that might follow upon it, by hindering others from embracing religion; or by tempting weak Chriſtians, either to the doing of a thing againſt their conſcience, or to a-

poſtatize from religion. In this caſe he that abſtains from theſe meats, and contents himſelf with others, *eats to the glory of God.*

And that this is the true notion of ſcandal and offence, not barely to grieve others, or do things diſpleaſing to them, but to do ſuch things as are really hurtful to others, and may be a prejudice or hinderance to their ſalvation, and an occaſion of their falling into ſin; I ſay, that this is the true and proper notion of ſcandal, is evident from what follows immediately after the text: *Give none offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; as I pleaſe all men in all things, not ſeeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved. Give no offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God;* the Apoſtle intimates that ſuch an action as this we are ſpeaking of, might be an occaſion of ſin to all theſe, and a hinderance of their ſalvation: it might hinder the Jew from turning Chriſtian, and harden him in his infidelity; for he might ſay, See how well you Chriſtians worſhip one God, when you can partake of things offered to idols: it might confirm the Heathen in his ſuperſtition, and keep him from embracing Chriſtianity; for he might ſay ſurely, Why ſhould the Chriſtians perſuade me to forſake the worſhip of idols, when they themſelves will knowingly eat things offered to them? It might tempt the weak Chriſtians either to ſin againſt their conſciences by following my example, or to apoſtatize from Chriſtianity upon this offence taken againſt it; therefore, ſays the Apoſtle, *do all things to the glory of God;* that is, for the honour and advantage of the Chriſtian religion, and the furtherance of mens ſalvation; for ſo, ſays he, I do in theſe, and all other actions of my life; I ſtudy the advantage of all men, in all things, not regarding mine own convenience, in compariſon of the eternal ſalvation of others.

And thus I have, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained this phraſe to you, of *doing things to the glory of God.*

The reſult of all is, that we glorify God by doing our duty, by all actions of worſhip and obedience to God, and by our repentance in caſe of ſin and diſobedience, by doing and by ſuffering the will of God, more

eſpecially

especially by using our Christian liberty, as to things lawful in themselves, so as may make most for the honour and advantage of religion, for the unity and edification of the church, and the salvation of the souls of men, which is the proper notion here in the text, *of eating and drinking, and doing whatever we do, to the glory of God.*

From all this discourse it will be evident, that three things much concur, that our actions may be said to be done *to the glory of God.*

1. Our actions must be materially good; we must do what God commands, and abstain from doing what he hath forbidden. Sin is in its nature a dishonour to God, a contradiction to his nature, and a contempt of his authority and laws; so that we cannot glorify God by transgressing our duty.

2. Our actions must not only be good, but they must be done with regard to God, and out of conscience of our duty to him, and in hopes of the reward which he hath promised, and not for any low, and mean, and temporal end. The best action in itself may be spoiled, and all the virtue of it blasted, by being done for a wrong end. If we serve God to please men, and be charitable out of vain-glory to be seen of men; if we profess godliness for gain, and are religious only to serve our temporal interest, though the actions we do be never so good; yet all the virtue and reward of them is lost, by the mean end and design which we aim at in the doing of them; because all this while we have no love or regard for God, and the authority of his laws; we make no conscience of our duty to him, we are not moved by the rewards of another world, which may lawfully work upon us, and prevail with us; but we are swayed by little temporal advantages, which if we could obtain as well by doing the contrary, we would as soon, nay perhaps much sooner do it.

And this is so essentially necessary, that no action, though never so good, that is not done with regard to God, and upon some of the proper motives and considerations of religion, such as are the authority of God, conscience of our duty to him, love of him, faith in his promises, fear of his displeasure; I say, no action that is not done

upon all, or some of these motives, can be said to be done to the glory of God. And this is the meaning of that saying among the Jews, which I mentioned before, *That he who obeys any command of God, but not in his name, shall receive no reward.* Moral actions receive their denomination of good or evil, as well from the end, as from the matter of them; and as the best end cannot sanctify an action bad in itself, so a bad end and design is enough to spoil the best action we can do; and as it is great impiety to do a wicked thing, though for a religious end, so it is great hypocrisy to be religious for mean and temporal ends.

2. That all our actions may be done to the glory of God, we must not only take care that they be lawful in themselves, but that they be not spoiled and vitiated by any bad circumstance; for circumstances alter moral actions, and may render that which is lawful in itself, unlawful in some cases: so that if we would *do all things to the glory of God*, we must in some cases refrain from doing that which is lawful in itself. As when such an action that I am about to do, may through the prejudice or mistake of men probably redound to the dishonour and disadvantage of religion, by causing factions and divisions, by hindering some from embracing the true religion, or making others apostatize from it, or by being any other way an occasion to men of falling into sin, or any impediment to their salvation; in these and the like cases, we are bound to have that consideration of religion, that regard to the peace and unity of the church, that tenderness and charity for the souls of men, as to deny ourselves the use of things otherwise lawful; and if we do not do it, we offend against a great rule both of piety and charity.

I shall only farther at present endeavour to give a brief resolution to two questions, much debated upon occasion of this rule of the Apostle, of *doing all things to the glory of God.*

First, How far we are bound actually to intend and design the glory of God in every particular action of our lives? To this I answer,

1. That it is morally impossible that a man should do every particular action with actual and implicit thoughts and

nd intentions of glorifying God thereby, and therefore here can be no obligation to any ſuch thing.

2. It is not neceſſary, no more than for a man that akes a journey, every ſtep of his way actually to think of his journey's end, and the place whither he intends o go. A conſtant reſolution to go to ſuch a place, and due care not to go out of the way; and in caſe of ny doubt, to inform ourſelves as well as we can of the ight way, and to keep in it, is as much conſideration of the end of a man's journey, as is needful to bring him thither, and more than this would be troubleſome nd to no purpoſe; the caſe is the very ſame in the courſe of a man's life. From whence it follows, in the

3. Place, That an habitual and ſettled intention of mind, to glorify God in the courſe of our lives, is ſufficient; becauſe this will ſerve all good purpoſes, as well as an actual intention upon every particular occaſion. He that doth things with regard to God, and out of conſcience of his duty to him, and upon the proper motives and conſiderations of religion, in obedience and love to God, in hopes of his reward, and out of fear of his diſpleaſure, glorifies God in his actions. And if this principle be but rooted and ſettled in his mind, it is ſufficient to govern his life, and is virtually, and to all purpoſes, as true and conſtant an intention of glorifying God, as if we did actually and explicitly propound this end to ourſelves in every particular action of our lives.

Secondly, Whether a man be bound to prefer the glory of God before his own eternal happineſs, as Moſes and St Paul ſeem to have done; the one in being content to *have his name blotted out of the book of life*, the other to be *anathema from Chriſt, for the ſalvation of Iſrael?* To this I anſwer,

If we could admit the ſuppoſition, that the glory of God and a man's eternal happineſs might come in competition, there could be no obligation upon a man to chuſe eternal miſery upon any conſideration whatſoever. The preference of one thing before another, ſuppoſeth them both to be ſubjects of our choice; but the greateſt evil, known and apprehended to be ſo, cannot be the object of a reaſonable choice; neither the greateſt mo-

ral nor natural evil of sin, or misery. Sin is not to be chosen in any case, no not for the glory of God. The Apostle makes the supposition, and answers it; that *if the truth and glory of God could be promoted by his lie*, yet we are *not to do evil that good may come*, Rom. iii. 7. 8.

Nor is the greatest natural evil the object of our choice. God himself hath planted a principle in our nature to the contrary, to seek our own happiness, and to avoid utter ruin and destruction; and then surely much more that which is much worse, as eternal misery is, whatever some learned men, in despite of nature and common sense, have asserted to the contrary, that it is better and more desirable to be extremely and eternally miserable, than not to be; for what is there desirable in being, when it serves to no other purpose but to be the foundation of endless and intolerable misery? and if this be a principle of our nature, can any man imagine that God should frame us so, as to make the first and fundamental principle of it directly opposite to our duty?

As to the instance of Moses, it does not reach this case; because the phrase of *blotting out of the book of life*, does in all probability signify no more than *a temporal death*. As to that of St Paul, it is by no means to be taken in a strict sense, but as a vehement and hyperbolical expression of his mighty affection to his *brethren according to the flesh, for whom*, says he, *I could wish to be an anathema from Christ*. Besides the reason of the thing, the form of the expression shews the meaning of it; *I could wish*, that is, I would be content to do or suffer almost any thing for their salvation, insomuch that *I could wish*, if it were fit, and lawful, and reasonable to make such a wish, *to be accursed from Christ for their sakes*. It is plainly a suspended form of speech, which declares nothing absolutely. But,

2. It is a vain and senseless supposition, that the glory of God and our eternal happiness can stand in competition. By seeking the glory of God, we naturally and directly promote our own happiness; the glory of God and our happiness are inseparably linked together; we cannot glorify God by sin; and so gracious hath God

God been to us, that he hath made those things to be our duty, which naturally tend to our felicity; and we cannot glorify God more than by doing our duty, nor can we promote our own happiness more effectually than by the same way. From whence it plainly follows, that the glory of God and our happiness cannot reasonably be supposed to cross and contradict one another; and therefore the question is frivolous which supposeth they may come in competition. 1 Cor. xv. 58. the Apostle exhorts Christians to be *stedfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* And Tit. i. 1. 2. the Apostle calls himself, *a servant of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised.* To serve God in hope of eternal life, is to glorify God; and therefore the glory of God, and our eternal happiness, are never to be opposed.

I shall briefly draw two or three inferences from this discourse, and so conclude.

I. See here the great goodness of God to mankind, who is pleased to esteem whatever is for the good of men to be for the glory of God; and whatever tends to the eternal salvation of ourselves, or others, to be a glorifying of himself.

II. We learn hence, likewise, the excellency of the Christian religion, which requires not only a conscientious care of ourselves, to do nothing but what is lawful; but likewise a charitable regard to others in the use of our liberty; in the doing or not doing of those things which we may lawfully do. After the securing of our own happiness by doing our duty, we are to consult the edification and salvation of others, in the charitable use of our liberty in those things which God hath left indifferent.

III. Here is a great argument to us to be very careful of our duty, and to abound in the fruits of holiness, because hereby we glorify God. *Herein is my Father glorified,* says our Saviour, *if you bring forth much fruit*; and the Apostle tells us, that *the fruits of righteousness are to the praise and glory of God.* We have all from God, our very being, our souls and bodies, and the powers and faculties of both; and therefore we should

give

give him the glory of his own gifts: our souls and bodies were not only made by him at first, but are likewise redeemed by him, and *bought with a price, and therefore,* as the Apostle argues, *we should glorify him in our bodies and in our souls which are his.*

IV. and lastly, We should in all our actions have a particular regard to the honour and advantage of religion, the edification of our brethren, and the peace and unity of the church; because in these things we do in a peculiar manner glorify God. In vain do men pretend to seek the glory of God by faction and division, which do in their own nature so immediately tend to the dishonour and damage of religion. Next to the wicked lives of men, nothing is so great a disparagement and weakening to religion, as the divisions of Christians; and therefore, instead of employing our zeal about differences, we should be zealous for peace and unity, *that with one mind, and one mouth, we may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

SERMON CCXI.

Doing good, a security against injuries from men.

1 Pet. iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

THE Apostle, in this and the former chapter, earnestly presseth Christians to an holy and unblameable conversation, that the Heathen might have no occasion, from the ill lives of Christians, to reproach Christianity; particularly he cautions them against that abuse of Christian liberty, which it seems too many were guilty of, casting off obedience to their superiors under that pretence; telling them that nothing could be a greater scandal to their religion, nor raise

ise a more just prejudice in the minds of men against t; and therefore he strictly chargeth them with the duy of obedience in their several relations; as of subjects o their governors, of servants to their masters, of wives o their husbands; and in short, to practise all those irtues, both among themselves and towards others, which are apt to reconcile and gain the affections of nen to them; to be charitable and compassionate, courteous and peaceable one towards another, and towards all men; not only to abstain from injury and provocation, but from revenge by word or deed; and instead thereof to bless and do good, and by all possible neans to preserve and pursue peace: Ver. 8. 9. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

And to encourage them to the practice of those virtues, he tells them, that they could by no other means more effectually consult the safety and comfort of their lives: ver. 10. *For he that will love life, and see good days: let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it.*

And this was the way to gain the favour of God, and to engage his providence for our protection: ver. 12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

And that this would also be the best way to reconcile men to us, and to gain their good-will, and to prevent injuries and affronts from them: ver. 13. *And who is he that will harm you,* &c.

In these words we have, *first,* a qualification supposed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.*

Secondly, The benefit and advantage we may reasonably expect from it, *viz.* security from the ill usage and injuries of men: *Who is he that will harm you?*

First, The qualification supposed is, that we be *followers of that which is good.* But what is that? The Apostle takes it for granted, that every body knows it, and

and he had given instances of it before. He does not go about to define or explain it, but appeals to every man's mind and conscience, to tell him what it is. It is not any thing that is disputed and controverted, which some men call good, and others evil; but that which all are agreed in, and which is universally approved and commended by Heathens as well as Christians, that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not zeal for lesser things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, and a great strictness about the external parts of it, and much nicety and scrupulousness about things of no moment, as the Pharisees tithing of mint, &c. about meats and drinks, and the observation of days, and the like; but a pursuit of *the weightier things of the law*, a care of the great duties of religion, *mercy, and justice, and fidelity*; those things *wherein the kingdom of God consists, righteousness and peace*: such as these the Apostle had instanced in as substantial and unquestionable parts of goodness, things which admit of no dispute, but do approve themselves to the reason and conscience of all mankind; and the practice of these he calls *following of that which is good* *.

Be ye followers of that which is good; the word is μιμηταὶ, *if ye imitate the good you see in others*; in one copy the word is ζηλωταὶ, *if ye be zealous of that which is good*. And this is not amiss. Zeal about lesser and disputable things is very unsuitable and misbecoming: but we cannot be too earnest and zealous in the pursuit of things which are substantially and unquestionably good; it is good, and will become us to be zealously affected about such things. Some things will not bear much zeal; and the more earnest we are about them, the less we recommend ourselves to the approbation of sober and considerate men. Great zeal about little and doubtful things, is an argument of a weak mind, infatuated by superstition, or over-heated by enthusiasm: but nothing more becomes a wise man, than the serious and earnest pursuit of those things which are agreed on all hands to be good, and have an universal approbation among all parties and professions of men, how

* See more of this in sermon 102.

wide

vide ſoever their differences may be in other matters. This for the qualification ſuppoſed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.* I proceed to the

Second thing in the text, the benefit and advantage which may reaſonably be expected from it, and that is, ſecurity from the ill uſage and injuries of men. *Who is he that will harm you,* &c. The Apoſtle doth not abſolutely ſay, none will do it; but he ſpeaks of it as a thing ſo very unreaſonable, and upon all accounts ſo unlikely and improbable, that we may reaſonably preſume that it will not ordinarily and often happen. Not but that good men are liable to be affronted and perſecuted, and no man's virtues, how bright and unblemiſhed ſoever, will at all times, and in all caſes, exempt him from all manner of injury and ill treatment: but the *following of that which is good,* as I have explained it, doth in its own nature tend to ſecure us from the malice and miſchief of men, and very frequently does it, and, all things conſidered, is a much more effectual means to this end, than any other courſe we can take; and this the Apoſtle means when he ſays, *Who is he that will harm you?*

And this will appear, whether we conſider the nature of virtue and goodneſs; or the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted; or the providence of God.

I. If we conſider the nature of virtue and goodneſs, which is apt to gain upon the affections of men, and ſecretly to win their love and eſteem. True goodneſs is inwardly eſteemed by bad men, and many times had in very great eſteem and admiration, even by thoſe who are very far from the practice of it: it carries an awe and majeſty with it; ſo that bad men are very often with-held and reſtrained from harming the good, by that ſecret and inward reverence which they bear to goodneſs.

There are ſeveral virtues, which are apt in their own nature to pervent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occaſion of inſolence from the proud and haughty; it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance. Meekneſs pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Suffering good for evil is

apt

apt to allay and extinguish enmity, to subdue the roughest dispositions, and to conquer even malice itself. And there are other virtues which are apt in their own nature to oblige men, and gain their good-will, and make them our friends, and tie their affections strongly to us; as courtesy and charity, kindness and compassion, and readiness to do all good offices to all men; and the friendship and good-will of others is a powerful defence against injuries. Every man will cry shame of those who shall fall foul upon him that hurts no body. He that obligeth many, shall have many to take his part when he is assaulted, to rise up in his defence and rescue and to interpose between him and danger. *For a good man*, says the Apostle, *some would even dare to die.*

Besides, it is very considerable, that none of these virtues expose men to any danger and trouble from human laws. When Christianity was persecuted, because it differed from, and opposed the received religion and superstition of the world, it was commonly acknowledged by the Heathen, as Tertullian tells us, that *the Christians were very good men in all other things, saving that they were Christians.* When the laws were most severe against Christians for their meetings, which they called seditious, and for their refusal to comply with the received superstition of the world, which they called contempt of the gods, yet there were all this while no laws made against modesty, and humility, and meekness, and kindness, and charity, and peaceableness, and forgiveness of injuries. These virtues are in their nature of so unalterable goodness, that they could not possibly be made matter of accusation; no government ever had the face to make laws against them. And this the Apostle takes notice of as a singular commendation, and great testimony to the immutable goodness of these things, that, in the experience of all ages and nations, there was never any such inconvenience found in any of them, as to give occasion to a law against them: Gal. v. 22. 23. *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. Against such things there is no law.* So that goodness from its own nature hath this security, that it brings men under the danger of no law.

II. If

II. If we consider the nature of man, even where it is very much depraved and corrupted. There is something that is apt to restrain bad men from injuring those that are remarkably good; a reverence for goodness, and the inward convictions of their own mind, that those whom they are going about to injure, are better and more righteous than themselves; the fear of God, and of bringing down his vengeance upon their heads, by their ill treatment of his friends and followers; and many times the fear of men, who though they be not good themselves, yet have an esteem for those that are so, and cannot endure to see them wronged and oppressed, especially if they have been obliged by them, and have found the real effects of their goodness in good offices done by them to themselves.

Besides that bad men are seldom bad for nought, without any cause given, without any manner of temptation and provocation to be so. Who will hurt a harmless man, and injure the innocent? for what cause, or for what end should he do it? he must love mischief for itself, that will do it to those who never offered him any occasion and provocation.

III. If we consider the providence of God, which is particularly concerned for the protection of innocency and goodness. *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the upright.* This the Apostle takes notice of, in the verse before the text, as the great security of good men against violence and injury: *The eyes of Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.* So that if bad men were never so ill-disposed toward the good, and bent to do them all the injury and mischief they could devise, the providence of God hath a thousand ways to prevent it; and if he pleases to interpose between them and danger, who can harm them if they would? He can *snare the wicked in the works of their own hands*, and make *the mischief which they have devised* against good men, *to return upon their own heads;* he can weaken their hands and infatuate their counsels, so that they shall not be able to bring their wicked enterprises to pass; he can change their hearts, and turn the fierceness and rage of men against us, into a fit of love and kind-

nefs, as he did the heart of Efau towards his brother J cob; and their bittereft enmity againft truth and goo nefs, into a mighty zeal for it, as he did in St Paul, wh when he came to Damafcus, fell *a-preaching up that wa* which he came thither on purpofe to perfecute. An this God hath promifed to do for good men who a careful to pleafe him. *When a man's ways pleafe t Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him.*

So that confidering the nature of goodnefs, and t nature of man, and the providence of God, *who is lik to harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?* non can reafonably do it, and he muft be a very bad ma that can find in his heart to do it, when there is n caufe, no temptation or provocation to it; and th providence of God, *who hath the hearts of men in h hands*, and *can fway and incline them as he pleafeth*, particularly concerned to preferve good men from harr and mifchief.

And yet we are not to underftand this faying of th Apoftle, as declaring to us the conftant and certain e vent of things, without any exception to the contrary For good men to appearance, nay thofe that are reall fo, and the very beft of men, are fometimes expofe to great injuries and fufferings; of which I fhall giv you an account in thefe following particulars.

I. Some that feem to be good, are not fincerely fo and when they, by the juft judgment of God, are puniſhe for their hypocrify, in the opinion of many, goodnef feems to fuffer. Some, under a great profeffion an colour of religion, have done very bad things, and whe they juftly fuffer for great crimes, they call puniſhmen perfecution, and the party and church which they ar of, call them faints and martyrs.

II. Some that are really good are very imperfectly fo, have many flaws and defects, which do very muc blemifh and obfcure their goodnefs; they are *follower of that which is good*, but they have an equal zeal fo things which have no goodnefs in them, or fo little tha it is not worth all that ftir and buftle which they mak about them; and will contend as earneftly for a doubt ful, and it may be for a falfe opinion, as for the article of the creed, and for *the faith which was once delivered t*

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be saints; and will oppose a little ceremony with as much heat as the greatest immorality. In these cases, it is not mens goodness which raiseth enmity against them, but their imprudent zeal and other infirmities which attend it: but however, bad men are glad to lay hold of these occasions and pretences of enmity, which their indiscretion offers. Good men may be, and frequently are, mistaken in their own opinions and apprehensions of things; but it is a great mistake to have an equal zeal for little and doubtful things, as for the great and indispensable duties of the Christian life, and yet many times do as to neglect those to a great degree; and men must blame themselves for the inconveniencies that happen to them for their own indiscretion; for neither will the nature of the thing bear them out alike, nor will the providence of God be equally concerned to protect men in the following of that, which they through gross mistake, and a heady conceit of their own knowledge in religion, think to be good, as in the following of that which is really and unquestionably good.

III. The enmity of some men against goodness is so violent and implacable, that no innocency, no excellency of goodness, how great soever, can restrain their malice towards good men, or hinder the effects of it, when it comes in their way, and they have power to do them mischief. Against these the providence of God is our best safeguard, and it is wisdom, as much as possible, to keep out of their way, and to pray with St Paul, that we may be *delivered from wicked and unreasonable men.* Men of so absurd a malice against goodness, that it is not to be prevented by any innocency or prudence; and so implacable, that there is no way to gain and reconcile them, nor perhaps is it much desirable; their good word would be no credit to us, and their friendship would be pernicious when it cannot be had upon other terms, than of conniving at their faults, and being concerned in their quarrels, and at last quarrelling and breaking with them, unless we will *run with them to the same excess of riot.* The friendship of such men is more terrible than their enmity, and their malice much less to be dreaded than their kindness.

IV. The last and chief exception is that of the cross, when the sufferings and persecutions of good men are necessary for the great ends of God's glory, for the advancement of religion, and the example and salvation of others. And with this exception, all the declarations of scripture concerning the temporal prosperity and safety of good men, and all the promises of the New Testament, are to be understood. And this exception our Saviour himself expressly makes, Mark x. 29. 30. *Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution; and in the world to come eternal life;* that is, so far as a state of persecution would admit, all these losses should be recompensed to them in this present time; as they were to the Apostles in a remarkable manner: when they who had but little to part with for the gospel, had the estates of Christians laid at their feet and committed to their disposal, for the noblest purposes of charity, and common support of Christians, which was as much to them, as if they had been masters of the greatest estates; and whatever was wanting to any of them in the accomplishment of this promise, was abundantly made up to them in the unspeakable and eternal happiness of the world to come. And this exception the Apostle St Peter is careful to mention expressly, immediately after the text; for after he had said, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* he immediately adds, *But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts;* that is, in this case, fear God more than men, *and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you;* that is, if ye be questioned for being Christians, be ready to own your profession, and to give a reason of it; so that the Apostle supposeth, that notwithstanding what he had said, that ordinarily it is not in the nature of men to persecute men for true goodness, yet they must not expect to be exempted

exempted from persecution, which was necessary for the establishment of the Christian religion.

In these cases God permits the devil to instigate and exasperate evil men against those that are good, to act beyond their usual temper. Thus God, when he designed an illustrious example of patience for all ages of the world, he lets loose the devil, not only to stir up his instruments the Chaldeans and Sabeans against Job, but to afflict him immediately himself with bodily pains and diseases. In these and the like cases, the best of men are exposed to the greatest sufferings. Thus God permitted Socrates, that great light among the Gentiles, and the glory of philosophy, to be cruelly treated and put to death, for an example of virtue, and a testimony against their impious and abominable idolatry. And thus likewise when it was necessary for the common salvation of men, and to give the world an example, beyond all exception, of the greatest innocency enduring the greatest indignities and sufferings with the greatest patience, that one should suffer for all mankind, he permitted the best man that ever was, God and goodness incarnate, by wicked hands to be crucified and slain; and afterwards when it was necessary for the propagation and establishment of Christianity in the world, that the truth of it should be sealed by the death of so many martyrs, God was pleased to suffer the rage of bad men to break out into all manner of violence and cruelty.

But yet, notwithstanding these exceptions, those who make it their business to do good, and to excel in those virtues which are apt to win and oblige mankind, may in ordinary cases and times expect great safety and protection against the injuries of the world, for an exemplary piety, and innocency, and goodness; for these sayings in the New Testament, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*, and *that whoever will live godly in Jesus Christ must suffer persecution*, are not equally to be extended to all places and times; but more peculiarly to be understood of the first times of Christianity, when the providence of God thought fit to establish the Christian religion upon the innocent lives and patient sufferings of the first professors of it.

The result from all this discourse is, that we should not be weary of well-doing; but mind and follow the things which are substantially and unquestionably good; not doubting, but, besides the infinite reward of it in the other world, it will ordinarily turn to our great security and advantage in this life, and save us harmless from a great many mischiefs and inconveniencies which others are exposed to. If we endeavour to excel in those Christian virtues which the Apostle mentions before the text, and which he means by our being *followers of that which is good,* we shall undoubtedly find the comfort of it, in those temporal benefits that will redound to us; for the scripture hath not said in vain, *Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Glory, and honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.* That *the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that work peace;* that *by well-doing we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;* that *the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men.*

But if we mistake religion, and place it in those things wherein it doth not really consist, in airy notions, and doubtful opinions, in superstitious conceits and practices, and in a fiery and furious zeal for things of no weight and substance, of no real virtue and goodness; if we be defective in the great virtues of meekness and humility, of peaceableness and charity, of kindness and courtesy, of forbearance and forgiveness, of *rendering good for evil,* and *overcoming evil with good,* qualities which will universally endear us and recommend us to the favour and protection of God, and to the esteem and goodwill of men; and if instead of these we abound in malice and envy, be proud and conceited, censorious and uncharitable, contentious and unpeaceable, rude and uncivil, impatient and implacable, we must not think it strange, if we be ill treated in this world, not for our goodness, but for our want of it; and we have no reason to wonder, if at every turn we meet with the inconveniencies

conveniencies of our own heat and indiſcretion, of our ſevi ſh and moroſe temper, of our factious and turbulent diſpoſition. For this is an eternal rule of truth, *Is we ſow, ſo ſhall we reap;* every man ſhall be *filled with his own ways, and eat the fruit of his own doings.*

SERMON CCXII.

Of diligence in our general and particular calling.

Preached at Whitehall, 1685.

ECCL. ix. 10.

Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt.

THeſe words of the royal preacher are a general exhortation to diligence and induſtry, in that work which is moſt proper for us to do in this world. And I ſhall conſider in them theſe two things.

Firſt, The matter of this advice and exhortation, and that is, that we would uſe great diligence about thoſe things which are the proper work and employment of this life. *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do;* that is, the work which is before thee, which is moſt proper for thee to propoſe to thyſelf, as the great end and deſign of thy life, the province and charge which is appointed thee. So that theſe words, in the full compaſs and extent of them, may very well comprehend every reaſonable purpoſe and undertaking, whatever is incumbent upon us as a duty, and is matter of reaſonable choice. *Do it with all thy might;* that is,

is, set about it with great care, use all possible diligence and industry for the effecting and accomplishing of it.

Secondly, Here is the argument whereby the wise preacher doth enforce this counsel and exhortation; because this life is the proper season of activity and industry, of designing and doing those things which are in order to a future happiness; and when this life is at an end, there will be no farther opportunity of working, there will nothing then remain, but to reap the fruit, and to receive the just recompense of what we have done in this life: *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.* *In the grave*, this the LXX. render by the word ἅδης, by which the Greeks used to express the state of the dead, the condition of separate souls of good or bad men after they are departed this life, and entered into another world. In which state, Solomon does not mean that departed souls have no knowledge and sense of any thing, but that then there will be no place for any counsel and design, for any activity and industry in order to our happiness: what we do to this purpose, we must do whilst we are in this world, it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition.

These are the two parts of the text, and they shall be the two heads of my following discourse; and God grant, that what shall be said upon them, may be effectual to persuade every one of us seriously to mind our great interest and concernment, and to apply ourselves with all our might to that which is our proper work and business in this world.

First, We will consider the matter of this counsel and exhortation; and that is, that we would use great diligence and industry about that which is our proper work and business in this life; and this may very probably comprehend in it these two things.

I. Diligence in our great work and business, that which equally concerns every man, I mean the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls.

II. Diligence in our particular calling and charge, whatever it be.

I. Diligence

I. Diligence in our great and general work, that which equally concerns every man, the buſineſs of religion, in order to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of our ſouls; and this conſiſts in theſe two things.

1. In a ſincere care and endeavour of univerſal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his laws.

2. In caſe of ſin and miſcarriage, in a ſincere repentance for our ſins, and a timely care to be reconciled to God.

1. In a ſincere care and endeavour of univerſal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his will and law. And this is a great work, and requires our greateſt care and diligence to rectify our minds, to reſtrain our evil inclinations, to ſubdue and mortify our luſts, to correct the irregularity of our paſſions, to moderate and govern our appetites and affections, and to keep them within due and reaſonable bounds, *to take heed to our ways, that we offend not with our tongue*, nor tranſgreſs our duty by word or deed; to ſerve God with true devotion of mind, both in public and private; to attend upon the duties of his worſhip, and to perform all acts of piety and religion, with care and conſtancy, in the ſincerity and uprightneſs of our hearts, to be meek and humble, peaceable and patient, chearful and contented with our condition; to be ready not only to forgive injuries, but to requite them with kindneſs and good turns, to do all offices of humanity and charity to all men, according to our ability and opportunity; to inſtruct the ignorant, and to reduce thoſe that are in error to the knowledge of the truth, by wiſe counſel and good example; to endeavour *to turn men from the evil of their ways*, and *to ſave their ſouls from death*; to be ready to ſupply mens outward wants and neceſſities, to comfort them in their ſorrows, and to relieve them in their affliction and diſtreſs.

And theſe works of compaſſion and charity are perhaps more particularly intended here in the text, for ſo the Chaldee paraphraſe interprets theſe words of Solomon, as a precept of charity, rendering them thus, *Do all thou canſt, according to thy utmoſt ability, in alms and charity*: for nothing but this will turn to our account

in another world; no other way of laying out our estate will be of any advantage to us in the future state. And though I do not think Solomon did here intend to exclude any part of religious practice, yet he might very well have a more especial eye and regard to this, as one of the principal instances and best evidences of a true and sincere piety, according to that of St James, chap. i. ver. last. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.* To be sure, our Saviour lays mighty weight upon it, by making it the great article upon which men shall be tried at the judgment of the great day. And indeed no religion is to be valued, that wants humanity and compassion; for so far as it departs from this, it departs from the true nature of God and religion.

So that it is a vast work which lies upon our hands, and which every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, are engaged in; this business of religion, this care of our whole man, and of our whole duty, of the inward frame and disposition of our minds, and of all our words and actions, *to keep our hearts with all diligence*, and carefully to observe and govern all the inclinations and motions of our souls, and *to order our whole conversation aright*; in a word, to do God all the services, and men all the good that possibly we can, while we are in this world. This is the first.

2. And because *in many things we offend all*, and *there is no man that sinneth not*, another part of our work and care is, in case of transgression and miscarriage in any part of our duty, to exercise repentance for it, that so we may be reconciled to God, and at peace with him.

And this is absolutely necessary, because our life and happiness depend upon it, *and except we repent we must perish*, and be miserable for ever. It cannot be denied but that this work of repentance is very harsh and unpleasant, like the taking of physic, and searching into a wound; but because it tends to our health and safety, and is the necessary way and means to a better condition, this severity must be submitted to, if we desire to be cured, and have a mind to do well; and the sooner we make use of this remedy the better, we shall find so much the less difficulty and pain in the cure.

And

And there is great reaſon why we ſhould frequently xerciſe and renew our repentance, becauſe our failings re frequent, and in one kind or other we offend and rovoke God every day: eſpecially when we are co-ing to the holy ſacrament, in which we ſolemnly renew ur covenant with God, and promiſe him better obedi-nce for the future; we ſhould examine ourſelves more trictly, and call our ſins more particularly to remem-brance, and exerciſe a moſt ſolemn and deep repentance for them; this is the way to keep our accounts in a good meaſure even. And this ſurely is great wiſdom. o provide that we may have no long account to make p, no great ſcores to wipe off, when we come to be o-ertaken by ſickneſs, and to lie upon our deathbed; hat innumerable tranſgreſſions unrepented of may not hen compaſs us about, and ſtare us in the face, and ill our ſouls with fear and confuſion, with horror and a-mazement in a dying hour; that an inſupportable load of guilt may not then lie upon our minds, and oppreſs our conſciences, when we are leaſt able to bear it, and moſt unfit to deal with it, when we may not have time to call our ſins particularly to remembrance, and to ex-erciſe a particular repentance for them, and yet per-haps a general repentance may not be ſufficient, and a-vailable with God, for the pardon and forgiveneſs of them.

Therefore we ſhould exerciſe ourſelves much in this work of repentance in the days of our health, when we are fitteſt for it, and when it will be moſt acceptable to God, and when the ſincerity of it will be moſt evi-dent and comfortable to us, when we may know it to be true by the real and certain effects of it, in the change and amendment of our lives. Whereas a deathbed-repentance is infinitely hazardous, becauſe we may not perhaps have time and opportunity for the exerciſe of it; or if we ſhould have that, yet hardly can we have opportunity for the trial of it, whether it be ſin cere or not, and conſequently muſt needs die very un-comfortably, and in great doubt and anxiety of mind, what will be our fate and doom in another world.

So that it is a great work which lies upon our hands, and equally concerns every one of us. The buſineſs of religion, which conſiſts in the ſtrict care of our duty

to

to God and man, and in the frequent exercise of repentance for the sins and miscarriages of our lives; and we may consequently judge how great a care and diligence a work of so much difficulty, and of so great moment and importance does require and call for at our hands. But besides this, we must, in the

II. Place, likewise be diligent in our particular calling and charge, in that province and station which God hath appointed us, whatever it be; whether it consists in the labour of our hands, or in the improvement of our minds in order to the gaining of knowledge for our own pleasure and satisfaction, and for the use and benefit of others; whether it lie in the skill of government, and the administration of public justice; or in the management of a great estate, of an honourable rank and quality above others, to the best advantage, for the honour of God, and the benefit and advantage of men, so as by the influence of our power and estate, and by the authority of our example, to contribute all we can to the welfare and happiness of others.

For it is a great mistake to think that any man is without a calling, and that God does not expect that every one of us should employ himself in doing good in one kind or other. Some persons indeed, by the privilege of their birth and quality, are above a common trade and profession; but they are not hereby either exempted or excused from all business, and allowed to live unprofitably to others, because they are so plentifully provided for themselves: nay, on the contrary, they have so much the greater obligation, having the greater liberty and leisure to attend the good of others; the higher our character and station is, we have the better opportunities of being publicly useful and beneficial; and the heavier will our account be, if we neglect these opportunities. Those who are in a low and private condition, can only shine to few; but they that are advanced to a great height above others, may, like the heavenly bodies, dispense a general light and influence, and scatter happiness and blessings among all that are below them.

And as they are capable of doing more good than others, so with more ease and effect; that which persons of an inferior rank can hardly bring others to, by all the importunity

nportunity of counsel and persuasion, as, namely, to ie practice of any virtue, and the quitting and abanoning of any vice, a prince and a great man that is ood himself, may easily gain them to, without ever eaking a word to them, by the silent authority and owerful allurement of his example. So that though e- ery man have not a particular profession, yet the high- t among men have some employment allotted to them y God, suitable to their condition, a province which e expects they should administer and adorn with great are.

The great business of the lower part of mankind is to rovide for themselves the necessaries of life, and it is ell if they can do it with all their care and diligence; ut those who are of a higher rank, their proper business nd employment is to dispense good to others; which urely is a much happier condition and employment, acording to that admirable saying of our Saviour, menioned by St Paul, *It is a more blessed thing to give, han to receive.* Those of meaner condition can only e men to one another, and it were well if they would e so; but he that is highly raised and advanced above thers, hath the happy opportunity in his hands, if he ave but the heart to make use of it, to be *a kind of God to men.*

Let no man then, of what birth, or rank, or quality oever, think it beneath him to serve God, and to be seful to the benefit and advantage of men; let us remember the Son of God, a person of the highest quality and extraction that ever was, who spent himself wholy in this blessed work of doing good, toiled and laboured in it as it had been for his life, submitted to all he circumstances of meanness, to all the degrees of contempt, to all kind of hardship and sufferings, for the benefit and salvation of men, sweat drops of blood, and at last poured it all forth in full streams, to save us from eternal misery and ruin; and is any of us better than *he Son of God, the heir of all things, and the elder brother of us all?* shall any of us, after this, think ourselves too good to be employed in that work which God himself disdained not to do, when he appeared in the likeness and nature of man?

If we would esteem things rightly, and according to reason, the true privilege and advantage of greatness is, to be able to do good more than others; and in this the majesty and felicity of God himself doth chiefly consist, in his ready and forward inclination, and in his infinite power and ability to do good. The creation of the world was a great and glorious design, but this God only calls his work; but to preserve and support the creatures which he hath made, to bless them and to do them good, to govern them by wise laws, and to conduct them to that happiness which he designed for them, this is his rest, his perpetual sabbath, his great delight and satisfaction to all eternity; to do good is our duty and our business, but it is likewise the greatest pleasure and recreation, that which refresheth the heart of God and man.

I have insisted the longer upon this, that those who are thought to be above any calling, and to have no obligation upon them, but to please themselves, may be made sensible, that, according to their ability and opportunity, they have a great work upon their hands, and more business to do than other men; which if they would but seriously mind, they would not only please God, but, I dare say, satisfy and please themselves, much better than they do in any other course. I know it is a duty particularly incumbent upon the lower part of mankind, to be diligent in their particular calling, that so they may provide for themselves and their families; but this is not so proper for this place, and if it were, the necessity of human life will probably prompt and urge men more powerfully to this, than any argument and persuasion that I can use. I proceed therefore, in the

Second place, to offer some considerations to excite our care and diligence in this great work, which God hath given us to do in this world, I mean chiefly the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. And to this purpose, I shall offer five or six arguments, reserving the great motive and consideration in the text to the last, *Because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.*

I. Let

I. Let us consider the nature of our work, which is ich as may both excite and encourage our diligence nd care about it. It is indeed a service, but such as ; our perfect freedom ; it is the service of God, whom o serve is the greatest honour that man or any other reature is capable of; it is obedience, but even obedience, onsidering our ignorance and frailty, is much wiser nd safer for us, than a total exemption from all law nd rule; for the laws which God hath given us, are ot imposed upon us merely for his will and pleasure, ut chiefly for our benefit and advantage. So that to bey and please God, is in truth nothing else but to do hose things which are really best for ourselves.

Besides that this work of religion will abundantly ecompense all the labour and pains it can cost, if we onsider the fruit and end of it, which is the salvation of our souls. So St Paul assures us, Rom. vi. 22. that if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life. Nay, this work doth not want its present encouragement and reward, if we consider the peace and pleasure which attend it. *Great peace*, saith David, *have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.* Religion doth not design to rob men of the true delights of life, of any lawful pleasure and enjoyment; it only appoints them their due place, and season, and measure, without which they cannot be truly tasteful and pleasant: if we make pleasure and recreation our business, it will become a burden, and leave a sting behind it; but if we make it our great business to be good, and to do good, we shall then take true pleasure in our recreations and refreshments, we shall *eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart*, as Solomon expresseth it a little before the text. Religion doth not ordinarily debar men of any contentment, which they can wisely and safely take, in any of the enjoyments of this life; but directs us to do those things which will yield the truest and most refined pleasure, and so governs us in the use and enjoyment of worldly comforts, that there shall be no bitterness in them, or after them: and in truth, after all our search and inquiry after pleasure and happiness, we shall find that there is no solid and lasting pleasure, but in living righteously and

religiously; and the pleasure of this is so great, that Heathen philosopher, speaking of a virtuous life, according to the true precepts of philosophy, breaks out in this rapture and transport concerning the wonderful pleasure of it, *Vel unus dies vere et ex præceptis tui actus peccandi immortalitati est anteferendus:* "Even one "day truly spent according to thy precepts is to be "valued above an immortality of sinning." There is no life so pleasant as that of the pious and good man who being contented with himself, every thing about him contributes to his chearfulness: *Gratior it dies et soles melius nitent;* "The day passeth more pleasant-"ly, and the sun shines brighter to him;" and every object which he beholds is more delightful, because the man is at peace and ease within himself.

II. Let us consider how great our work is, and then we shall easily be convinced what care it requires, what diligence it calls for from us. Very few persons, I doubt, are sufficiently sensible, how much thought and consideration, how much care and vigilancy, how firm a resolution and earnest attention of mind is necessary to the business of religion, to the due cultivating and improving of our minds, to the mortifying and subduing of our lusts, to the mastering and governing of our passions, to the reforming of our tempers, to the correcting of all the irregularities of our appetites and affections, and to the reducing of our crooked wills, which have been long obstinately bent the wrong way, to the straightness of that rule which God hath given us to walk by.

Few, I fear, consider how much pains is necessary to the storing of our minds with good principles, and to the fixing and rivetting in our souls all the proper motives and considerations to engage us to virtue, that in all the occasions of our lives they may have their due force and influence upon us. Few of us take pains to understand the just bounds and limits of our duty, and so to attend thereto, as to be always upon our guard against the infinite temptations of human life, and the many malicious enemies of our souls, that we may not be circumvented by the wiles of the devil, nor caught in those snares which he lays before us in our ways, that

hat we may not be wrought upon by the insinuations, or over-reached by the deceitfulness of sin.

How few consider what care and watchfulness of ourselves, what constancy and fervency of prayer to God, is necessary to the due discharge of every part of our duty; or to the right exercise of every grace and virtue! Besides an earnest imploring of the divine assistance, there is required likewise a particular care and application of mind, that we may fail in no point; and that, as St James expresseth it, *we may be entire, wanting nothing;* that our faith and our hope, our devotion and our charity, our humility and our patience, and every other grace may be exercised in the best manner, and have its proper work.

III. Consider, what incredible pains men will take, what diligence they will use for bad purposes, and for ends infinitely less considerable. *Ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones; ut teipsum serves, non expergiscere?* "Thieves will rise and travel by night to rob "and kill, and shall we use no care, no vigilance to "save ourselves?" What drudges and slaves are many men to their sensual pleasures and lusts? how hot and fierce upon revenge? and what hazards will they run to satisfy this unreasonable and devilish passion; and thereby to make way for a speedy and bitter repentance, which always treads upon the heels of revenge? for no sooner hath any man executed his rage upon another, but his conscience presently turns it upon himself.

How industrious do we see men at their recreations and sports, taking really more pains for the sake of pleasure, than the poor man does that works for his living?

What a violent thirst, and insatiable covetousness possesseth some men after learning and knowledge? how will they toil and watch, wear out their eyes and waste their spirits, and pursue their studies, not only with the neglect of fitting diversion, but even of the necessary support and reparation of nature, by meat and sleep? nay, many times, to increase their learning, they weaken their understandings; and for the gaining

of more knowledge, do disable that power and faculty which should make use of it when they have it.

How will men attend for several hours to a lewd and extravagant play, and sit not only with patience, but with delight to hear things spoken, which are neither fit to be spoken nor heard?

And above all, how eager and earnest, how busy and industrious are a great part of mankind, in the pursuit of their ambitious and covetous designs? How sorely will they labour and travel? how hardly will they be contented to fare, and how meanly will they live themselves, to make they know not whom rich; even anybody that happens to come in their way, when they make their last wills?

And are men at all these pains for compassing of their low and mean, of their vile and wicked designs, to do themselves no good; nay, for the most part, to hurt and destroy themselves; and are the present pleasure and satisfaction of our minds, and eternal life and happiness in another world, things of no value and esteem with us? is salvation itself so slight and inconsiderable a thing, that it deserves none of this care and diligence to be used for the obtaining of it?

IV. Consider that when we come to die, nothing will yield more true and solid consolation to us, than the remembrance of an useful and well-spent life, a life of great labour and diligence, of great zeal and faithfulness in the service of God; and on the contrary, with what grief and regret shall we look back upon all those precious hours which we have so fondly misplaced in sin and vanity? how shall we then wish that we could recall them, and live them over again, that we might spend them better? all that time which now lies upon our hands, and we know not how to bestow it and pass it away, will then most assuredly lie heavy upon our consciences. What anguish and confusion have I seen in the looks and speeches of a dying man, caused only by the grievous remembrance of an unprofitable and ill-spent life! So foolish are many men, as never seriously to think for what end they came into the world, till they are just ready to go out of it.

V. Consider,

V. Consider, that the degrees of our happiness in another world will certainly bear a proportion to the degrees of our diligence and industry, in serving God and doing good. And it is an argument of a mean spirit, nor to aspire after the best and happiest condition, which is to be attained by us. To be contented barely to live, when by our pains and industry we may become considerable, and raise ourselves above the common level of men, is a sign of a poor and degenerate mind; so is it in the business of religion, to be contented with any low degrees of virtue and goodness, and consequently of glory and happiness, when by a great diligence and industry in serving our generation according to the will of God, we may be of the number of those whose reward shall be great in heaven, and have a place there, among those righteous persons, who shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Besides, that it may prove a thing of dangerous consequence to us, to deal thus strictly with God, and to drive so near and hard a bargain with him; we may easily miss of happiness and come short of heaven, if we only design just to get thither; we may be mistaken in the degree of holiness and virtue, which is necessary to recommend us to the divine favour and acceptance, and to make us capable of the glorious reward of eternal life: for unto whomsoever much is given, saith our Saviour, of him much shall be required; to him that hath only one talent committed to him, it may be sufficient to have gained one; but he that hath many talents intrusted with him, may gain one, and yet be a wicked and slothful servant; proportionably to our advantages and opportunities, our duty increaseth upon our hands, and better and greater things may justly be expected from us. The consideration whereof should make us unwearied in our endeavours of doing good, *and stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

VI. and lastly, Let us consider the argument here in the text, *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going. Longe quiescendi tempora fata dabunt.* We shall then rest from our

our labours, and our works will follow us. This life is the time of our activity and working, the next is the season of retribution and recompense; we shall then have nothing to do, but either to reap and enjoy the comfort of well-doing, or to repent the folly of an ill-spent life and the irreparable mischief which thereby we have brought upon ourselves: *There is no work nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest;* intimating that our life is a continual journey towards the grave, shorter or longer as God pleaseth; and many times when we think ourselves far from it, we may be just upon it, and ready to stumble into it. So that our time of working may be very short, to be sure it is very uncertain.

And it is very well worth our consideration, that as *there is no work nor wisdom in the grave*, so there is very little to be exercised when we come to draw near to it, whether it be by sickness or old age: sufficient surely *for that day will be the evil thereof.* We had need then to have nothing else to do, but to be old and weak, to be sick and die; we shall find that to be burden and trouble enough.

Let us therefore work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day: for the night cometh, saith our Saviour, (by which may probably be meant the time of sickness or old age), *the night cometh when no man can work;* so that what we do, we must do quickly, mind the work which is before us, and ply it with all our might, as if it were the last opportunity we should ever have; and so it may prove for ought we know, for it is ten to one but that some here present, and God knows which of us it may be, may now have the last opportunity in our hands, and that but a slippery hold of it, and may never have this counsel given us again, nor perhaps be long in a capacity to make use of it; for when death hath once overtaken us, it will fix us in an unchangeable state; *as the tree falls, so it shall lie.*

This is the time of our work and preparation for another world, and what we do towards it in this life, will avail us in the other; but if this opportunity be neglected, there is nothing to be done by us afterwards, but to inherit the fruit of our own folly and neglect; to sit down in everlasting sorrow, and to be immutably fixed

ved in that miserable state, which whilst we were in this orld we could never be persuaded to take any tolera-le care to avoid.

And if we can do nothing for ourselves to help and elieve us in that state, much less can we think it can e done to us by others, by the consigning of masses and rayers, of merits and indulgences, to our use and be-efit in another world. No; so soon as ever we are assed into the other state, we shall enter upon a condi-ion of happiness or misery, that is never to be altered, o that this life is the proper season for wisdom to shew itself, and to exercise our best industry for the attaining f happiness: it will be too late afterwards to think of ltering or bettering our condition; for death will con-lude and determine our state one way or other, and what we are when we leave the world, good or bad, itted for happiness or misery, we shall remain and con-tinue so for ever.

Therefore it infinitely concerns all of us, to exercise our best wisdom in this present life, and what we have to do for our souls, and for all eternity, *to do it with all our might*; to contrive and use the best means to be happy, while the opportunity of doing it is yet in our hands; we may easily let it slip, but no care, no wisdom, no diligence, no repentance, can retrieve it; when it is once lost, it is lost for ever.

Hear then the conclusion of the whole matter. Would we enjoy ourselves and the peace of our minds while we live? would we have good hopes and comfort in our death, and after death would we be happy for ever? let us lay the foundation of all this, in the activity and industry of a religious and holy life; a life of unspotted purity and temperance in the use of sensual pleasures, of sincere piety and devotion towards God, of strict justice and integrity, and of goodness and charity towards men.

And let us consider that many of us are a great way already on our journey towards the grave, that our day is declining apace, and the shadows of the evening begin to be stretched out: therefore that little of our life which is yet behind us, should be precious to us, *ut esse solis gratius lumen solet, jam jam cadentis*; we should improve

prove that which yet remains, as it were for our lives always remembering that our only opportunity of working, of deſigning and doing great and happy things for ourſelves, is on this ſide the grave, and that this opportunity will expire and die with us: *For there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither we are going.*

Now, God of his infinite mercy grant, that we may all of us know, in this our day, the things which belong to our preſent peace, and future happineſs, before they be hid from our eyes, for his mercy's ſake in Jeſus Chriſt; to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, thankſgiving and praiſe, now and for evermore.

SERMON CCXIII.

Of the bleſſedneſs of giving, more than that of receiving.

ACTS xx. 35.

And to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.

The whole verſe runs thus:

I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.

THE words which I have read to you have this particular advantage to recommend them to our more attentive conſideration, that they are a remarkable ſaying of our Lord himſelf, not recorded by any of the evangeliſts among his other ſayings and diſcourſes, but remembered by the apoſtles, and by ſome of

them delivered to St Paul, and by him preſerved to in his farewell-ſpeech to the elders of Epheſus. In hich after he had given them ſome needful advice, and ommended them to the grace of God, he appeals to em concerning the integrity of his converſation among em; that he was ſo far from ſeeking his own advan-ge, and from coveting any thing that was theirs, that had not only ſupported himſelf, but alſo relieved others y the labour of his own hands; giving them herein a reat example of charity, which, it ſeems, he was wont enforce upon them by an excellent ſaying of our Lord, *it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.*

And it is really a particular endearment of this say-ng to us, that being omitted by the evangeliſts, and in anger of being loſt and forgotten, it was ſo happily re-rieved by St Paul, and recorded by St Luke. The ommon ſayings of ordinary perſons periſh without re-ard, and are ſpilt like water upon the ground, which o body goes about to gather up; but the little and hort ſayings of wiſe and excellent men are of great alue, like the duſt of gold, or the leaſt ſparks of dia-nonds. And ſuch is this ſaying of our Lord, which is ot only valuable out of reſpect to its author, but for he ſake of that admirable ſenſe which is contained n it.

Some interpreters have needleſsly troubled themſelves o find theſe words, or ſomething equivalent to them, n the goſpel. That the ſenſe of them may be inferred rom ſeveral paſſages in the goſpel, none will deny; but that they are either expreſsly to be found there, or that there is any ſaying that ſounds to the ſame ſenſe, I think no body can ſhew. Beſides, that St Paul cites a par-ticular ſentence or ſaying of our Lord, that was ῥητῶς, and in thoſe very words ſpoken by him.

And there is no reaſon to imagine, that the goſpels are a perfect and exact account of all the ſayings and actions of our Lord, though St Luke calls his goſpel, *A treatiſe of all things that Jeſus did and ſpake;* that is, of the principal actions of his life, and the ſubſtance of his diſcourſes, at leaſt ſo much of them as is needful for us to know: for St Luke leaves out ſeveral things re-lated by the other evangeliſts. And St John expreſsly

tells

tells us, that Jeſus did innumerable things not recorde in the hiſtory of his life: and there is no doubt but th diſciples of our Lord remembered many particular ſay ings of his, not ſet down in the goſpels, which upo occaſion they did relate and communicate to others, a they did this to St Paul.

The words themſelves are the propoſition I ſhal ſpeak to, *It is a more bleſſed thing to give, than to receive* This, I know, ſeems a paradox to moſt men, who know no happineſs but in hoarding up what they have, anc in receiving and heaping up more; but as ſtrange a this ſaying may appear, the ſenſe of it is owned an aſſented to by thoſe great oracles of reaſon, the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate Heathens; τῆς ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον τό εὖ ποιεῖν ἢ τὸ εὖ πάσχειν, "It is a more virtuous thing to do "than to receive good," ſays Ariſtotle; which according to his opinion was to ſay, it is a greater happineſs, becauſe he placed happineſs in the practice and exerciſe of virtue. To the ſame purpoſe is that ſaying of Plutarch, ἓυ ποιεῖν ἥδιόν ἐστιν ἢ πάσχειν, "There is "more pleaſure in doing a kindneſs, than in taking "one." And that of Seneca, *Malim non recipere beneficia, quam non dare:* "Of the two, I had rather "not receive benefits, than not beſtow them." And that the Heathen have ſpoken things to the ſame ſenſe of this ſaying of our Saviour's, is ſo far from being any prejudice to this ſaying of our Saviour, that it is a great commendation of it, as being an argument that our Saviour hath herein ſaid nothing, but what is very agreeable to the beſt notions of our minds, and to the higheſt reaſon and wiſdom of mankind. In the handling of this propoſition, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, Endeavour to convince men of the truth and reaſonableneſs of it.

Secondly, To perſuade men to act ſuitably to it.

Firſt, To convince men of the truth and reaſonableneſs of this principle, that *it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.* And this will fully appear by conſidering theſe three things.

I. That it is an argument of a more happy ſpirit and temper.

II. Of

II. Of a more happy ſtate and condition. And,

III. That it ſhall have the happineſs of a greater reward.

I. To be governed by this principle, is an argument of a more happy ſpirit and temper. To do good, to be useful and beneficial to others, to be of a kind and obliging diſpoſition, of a tender and compaſſionate ſpirit, ſenſible of the ſtraits and miſeries of others, ſo as to be ready to eaſe and relieve them, (for to this kind of goodneſs and charity the Apoſtle applies this ſaying of our Saviour, as appears by the context), this certainly is the happieſt ſpirit and temper in the world; and is an argument of a noble, and generous, and large heart, that is not contracted within itſelf, and confined to little and narrow deſigns, and takes care of nobody but itſelf, envying that others ſhould ſhare with it, and partake of its happineſs; but is free and open, *ready to do good, and willing to communicate*, and thinks its own happineſs increaſed, by making others happy.

It is the property of narrow and envious ſpirits to think their own happineſs the greater, becauſe they have it alone to themſelves; but the nobleſt and moſt heavenly diſpoſitions deſire that others ſhould ſhare with them in it. Of all beings, God is the fartheſt removed from envy and ill-will; and the nearer any creature approacheth to him, the farther it is from this helliſh diſpoſition. For it is the temper of the devil to grudge happineſs to others; he envied that man ſhould be in paradiſe, and was reſtleſs till he had got him out.

Some perfections are of a more ſolitary nature and diſpoſition, and ſhine brighteſt when they are attained but by few, as knowledge and power: but the nature of goodneſs is to diffuſe and communicate itſelf, and the more it is communicated, the more glorious it is. And therefore knowledge and power may be in a nature moſt contrary to God's; the devil hath theſe perfections in a high degree.

To receive good from others, is no certain argument of virtue or merit, for the unworthy and unthankful often receive benefits; but to be good and do good, is the excellency of virtue, becauſe it is to reſemble God in that which is the moſt amiable and glorious of all his

other perfections. And therefore when Moſes deſire to ſee God's glory, Exod. xxxiii. 19. he tells him, tha *he will cauſe all his goodneſs to paſs before him.* With out goodneſs the power and wiſdom of God would b terrible, and raiſe great dread and ſuperſtition in th minds of men. Without goodneſs, power would b tyranny and oppreſſion, and wiſdom would degenerat into craft and miſchievous contrivance. So that a be ing endowed with all power and wiſdom, and yet want ing goodneſs, would be a dreadful and omnipotent mi chief. We are apt to dread power, and to admi knowledge, and to ſuſpect great wiſdom and prudence but we can heartily love and reverence nothing bu true goodneſs. It is not the infinite power and know ledge of God, conſidered abſtractedly, and in themſelve but theſe in conjunction with his great goodneſs, tha make him at once the moſt awful and amiable being i the world; which is the reaſon why our Saviou Matth. v. 48. ſpeaks of the mercy, and goodneſs, an patience of God, as the top and ſum of the divine per fections. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father whi is in heaven is perfect.* How is that? in being *good t the evil and unthankful, as God is, who makes his ſun t riſe, and his rain to fall, not only on the juſt but unjuſ* And therefore St Luke renders it, *Be ye therefore mer ciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful.* To b *good and merciful as God is,* is to be *perfect as he is*; becau it is to imitate him in that which is his chief perfectio

Gratitude is one of the nobleſt virtues, and our good neſs to men is gratitude in us to God. It is an acknow ledgment of the bleſſings we have received fro God; the beſt uſe we can make of them, and the be requital we can make to him for all his benefits. Fo we can give him nothing again, becauſe he ſtands i need of nothing. But a truly grateful perſon, wh hath a kindneſs done to him by one that is out of a capacity and reach of requital, will inquire whethe there be any of his family and relations, to whom h may ſhew a kindneſs for his ſake. Yea, benefits hav often been requited by thankful perſons, upon thoſe wh did but reſemble their benefactors, though they were no wiſe related to them. Though we can do nothing t

God

od, yet we may do it to men, who are *made after the tage of God.* We may ſhew kindneſs to his relations, id to thoſe of his houſehold and family, to his crea- ures, to his ſervants, to his friends, and to his chil- ren here in the earth.

Beſides that our goodneſs to others like ourſelves, an argument of great conſideration and prudence; is a ſign that we know ourſelves, and conſider what e are and what we may be; it ſhews, that we have a ue ſenſe of the indigence and infirmity of human na- ure, and of the change and viciſſitude of human af- irs; it is a juſt ſenſe and acknowledgment of our ſtate, nat we are inſufficient for our own happineſs, and nuſt depend upon the kindneſs, and good-will, and riendſhip of other men; that we all either do or may and in need of others one time or other: for he who now in the greateſt plenty and abundance of all hings, and thinks *his mountain ſo ſtrong, that he can ever be moved,* may, by a ſudden revolution of fortune, y a thouſand accidents, be thrown down from his height f proſperity, into the depth of miſery and neceſſity.

And as it is an argument of conſideration, ſo of great rudence. He that is good to others, apt to commi- erate their ſad caſe, and to relieve them in their ſtraits, akes the wiſeſt and ſureſt way that can be, to incline nd engage others to be good to him, when it ſhall fall o his lot to ſtand in need of their kindneſs and pity. Jpon this account our Saviour commends the *prudence of he unjuſt ſteward,* who laid in for the kindneſs of others, igainſt himſelf ſhould have occaſion for it.

And though it ſhould happen otherwiſe, and that ve ſhould have an uninterrupted tenor of proſperity, vhich few or none have, or that coming to ſtand in need of others, our kindneſs ſhould meet with no equal returns, yet it would not be quite loſt; for, as Seneca truly ſays, *delectat etiam ſterilis beneficii conſcientia;* though our charity ſhould fall upon ſtony and barren ground, and we ſhould find no fruit of it from thoſe whom we have obliged, yet there is a pleaſure in being conſcious to ourſelves, that we have done well, what was worthy and generous, and what became wiſe and conſiderate men to do, whatever the event and ſucceſs

be: for ſetting aſide all ſelfiſh reſpects, purely out humanity and charity, and a generous compaſſion, w ſhould be ready, as we have opportunity, to do goo to all that ſtand in need of our kindneſs and help.

So that a diſpoſition to do good is the beſt and hap pieſt temper of mind, becauſe it is the neareſt reſem blance of the divine nature, which is perfectly happy it is a grateful acknowledgment of our obligations t God, and all that we can render to him for his benefits it is an argument of great wiſdom and conſideration; i gives eaſe and ſatisfaction to our minds: and the re flection upon any good that we have done, is certainl the greateſt contentment and pleaſure in the world and a felicity much beyond that of the greateſt fortun of this world: whereas the ſpirit contrary to this, i always uneaſy to itſelf; the envious and malicious the hard-hearted and ill-natured man, carries his own torment and hell about him, his mind is full of tumul tuous agitations and unquiet thoughts: but, were ou nature rectified, and brought back to its primitive frame and temper, we ſhould take no ſuch pleaſure in any thing as in acts of kindneſs and compaſſion, which are ſo ſuitable and agreeable to our nature, that they are peculiarly called humanity, as if without this temper we were not truly men, but ſomething elſe diſguiſed under a human ſhape.

II. *To give,* is an argument of a more happy ſtate and condition than *to receive.* To receive from others is an argument of indigency, and plainly ſhews that we are in want and neceſſity; either that we ſtand in need of ſomething, or that we think we do; and either of theſe conditions is far from perfect happineſs: but to give is an argument of fulneſs and ſufficiency, that we have more than is neceſſary for ourſelves, and ſomething to ſpare.

To receive kindneſs from others, ſuppoſeth we ſtand in need of it; and to ſtand in need of it, is to be in a ſtate of being obliged and indebted. Obligation is a dear thing, and a real debt which lies heavy and uneaſy upon a grateful mind: ſo much obligation as any man hath to another, ſo much he hath loſt of his own liberty and freedom; for it gives him that hath obliged

us,

, a ſuperiority and advantage over us. And what olomon ſays of the borrower, that *he is a ſervant to ie lender*, is in proportion true in this caſe, that *the ceiver is a ſervant to the giver.*

But to be able to benefit others, is a condition of eedom and ſuperiority, and is ſo far from impairing ur liberty, that it ſhews our power: and the happineſs hich we confer upon others, by doing them good, is ot only a contentment to ourſelves, but we do in ſome ort enjoy the happineſs we give, in being conſcious to urſelves that we are the authors of it. And could we ut once come to this excellent temper, to delight in he good that others enjoy, as if it were our own, (and is our own, if we be the inſtruments of it, and take leaſure in it); I ſay, could we but once come to this emper, we need not envy the wealth and ſplendor of he moſt proſperous upon earth; for upon theſe terms he happineſs of the whole world would in ſome ſort be urs, and we ſhould have a ſhare in the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of all that good which happens to any man ny way, eſpecially by our means.

To depend upon another, and to receive from him, nd to be beholden to him, is the neceſſary imperfecion of creatures: but to confer benefits upon others, to reſemble God, and to approach towards divinity. ariſtotle could ſay, that by narrowneſs and ſelfiſhneſs, y envy and ill-will, men degenerate into beaſts, and ecome wolves and tygers to one another; but by goodeſs and kindneſs, by mutual compaſſion and helpfuleſs, men become gods to one another. To be a benefactor, is to be as like God as it is poſſible for men to e; and the more any one partakes of this divine quaity and diſpoſition, the liker and nearer he is to God, *ho is good to all, and whoſe tender mercies are over all is works.*

The bleſſed angels, who behold the face of God conſtantly, are, as it were, perfectly transformed into the mage of the divine goodneſs, and therefore the work which with ſo much chearfulneſs and vigour they employ themſelves in, is to be *miniſtring ſpirits for the ood of the elect*, to bring men to goodneſs, and to encourage, and aſſiſt, and comfort them in well-doing.

And our bleſſed Lord, when he was upon earth, did it nothing ſhew himſelf more like the Son of God, than in going about doing doing. And the wonderful works which he did, gave teſtimony of his divinity, not ſo much as they were acts of power as of goodneſs, and wrought for the benefit and advantage of men. And the true advantage of greatneſs, and wealth, and power does not conſiſt in this, that it ſets men above others but that it puts them in a capacity of doing more good than others. Men are apt to call them their betters who are higher and richer than themſelves: but in a true and juſt eſteem of things, they only are our betters who do more good than we. From the meaneſt creature below us, up to God himſelf, they are the beſt and happieſt, and moſt perfect beings, who are moſt uſeful and beneficial to others, who have the moſt power and the ſtrongeſt inclinations to do good.

III. *To give,* that is, to be beneficial and to do good to others, hath the happineſs of a great reward. There is no grace or virtue whatſoever, which hath in ſcripture the encouragement of more and greater promiſes than this, of happineſs in general; of temporal happineſs in this life; of happineſs at death; and of everlaſting happineſs in the world to come.

1. For promiſes of happineſs in general. *He hath diſperſed, he hath given to the poor, his righteouſneſs endures for ever,* that is, ſhall never be forgotten, ſhall not paſs unrewarded. Prov. xiv. 21. *He that giveth to the poor, happy is he.* Matth. v. 7. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* Luke vi. 38. *Give, and it ſhall be given unto you; good meaſure, preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and running over, ſhall men give into your boſom: for with the ſame meaſure that ye mete withal, it ſhall be meaſured to you again;* that is, according to our goodneſs and compaſſion towards others, we muſt expect to find the charity of men, and the compaſſions of God towards us. Job ſpeaks as if ſome eminent and peculiar bleſſing did attend and follow acts of charity, Job xxix. 13. *The bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh came upon me.*

2. Promiſes of temporal happineſs in this life. Pſal. xxxvii. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good: ſo ſhalt thou dwell*

well in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Prov. xviii. 27. *He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack.* Nay, God hath promised to have a particular respect to such as do good, in every condition, and all kinds of troubles that befal them. Psal. xli. 1. 2. 3. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

2. Of happiness in death. *The righteous*, saith Solomon, Prov. xiv. 32. *hath hope in his death.* By *the righteous* in scripture is frequently meant *the merciful and good man.* And so it is to be understood, as appears from the context; *He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his maker: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy upon the poor. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.* If God design to send calamities upon the earth, upon the place where the good man lives, which it would grieve him to see, or which he might be involved in, so as either to make his life uncomfortable, or to cut him off by a violent death; God considers the merciful man, and removes him out of the way, into a better and safer place, Is. lvii. 1. *The merciful man is taken away from the evil to come.*

4. The promises of eternal life and happiness in the world to come. Luke xiv. 12. 14. *But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* And chap. xvi. 9. *And I say unto you*, saith our Lord, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, that is, do good with what you have, *that when ye fail, they may receive you unto everlasting habitations.* 1 Tim. vi. 17. 18. 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,*

nicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. And the more to fix upon our minds the neceſſity of doing good, eſpecially in ways of mercy and charity, our Lord repreſents this as the great matter of inquiry at the great day of judgment, how they have behaved themſelves in this kind, what good they have done, or omitted and neglected to do; eſpecially to thoſe who are in miſery and want; and as if the ſentence of eternal happineſs or miſery would accordingly paſs upon them. And this, methinks, ſhould make a mighty impreſſion upon us, to think that when we ſhall appear before the great judge of the world, we are to expect mercy from him, according to the meaſure that we have ſhewed it to others.

And now, if men be thoroughly convinced of the happineſs of this temper, methinks it would be no difficult matter to perſuade them to it. If we believe this ſaying of our Lord, that *it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive;* let us do accordingly.

I know that to carnal and earthly-minded men, this muſt needs ſeem a new and wrong way to happineſs. For if we may judge of mens perſuaſions by their practice, which ſeems to be a reaſonable and good ſure way of judging, I am afraid it will appear, that few believe this to be the way to happineſs. If we mind the courſe of the world, and the actions of men, it is but too evident that moſt men place their greateſt felicity in receiving and getting the good things of this world; almoſt *all ſeek their own things, and but few the good of others. Many ſay, Who will ſhew us; who will do us any good?* but few aſk that queſtion, *What good thing ſhall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* And when our Lord tells men that they muſt give to the poor, if they would have treaſure in heaven; that they muſt be charitable, if they would be happy; that *it is a more bleſſed thing to give, than to receive,* theſe are ſad and melancholy ſayings to thoſe who have great poſſeſſions; and moſt men are ready, with the young man in the goſpel, to part with our Lord, and to break with him upon theſe terms.

But

But let us remember that this was *the saying of our Lord Jesus*, whom we all profess to believe, and to imitate in all things: but more especially let us do so in this, because it was not a bare speculation, a fine and glorious saying, like those of the philosophers, who did great and glorious things, but did them not; but his was his constant practice, the great work and business of his life. He who pronounced it the most blessed thing to do good, spent his whole life in this work, and went about *doing good*. To this end all his activity and endeavours were bent. This was the life which God himself, when he was pleased to become man, thought fit to lead in the world, *giving us herein an example that we should follow his steps*. He made full trial and experience of the happiness of this temper and spirit; for he was all on the giving hand. He would receive no portion and share of the good things of this world. He refused the greatest offers. When the people would have made him a king, he withdrew and hid himself. He was contented to be worse accommodated than the creatures below us. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*. He would not so much as have any fixed abode and habitation, that he might be at liberty to go about *doing good*. He received nothing but injuries and affronts, base and treacherous usage from an ungrateful world, to whom he was so great and so universal a benefactor. The whole business of his life was *to do good*, and *to suffer evil for so doing*. So fixed and steady was he in his own principle and saying, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*. He gave away all that he had to do us good, he parted with his glory and his life, *emptied himself, and became of no reputation*; and *being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich*.

So that he adviseth us nothing, but what he did himself; nor imposeth any thing upon us, from which he himself desired to be excused. And surely we have great reason to be in great love with this pattern, when that very goodness which he propounds to our imitation, was all laid out upon us, and redounds to our benefit and advantage; when our salvation and happi-

ness

neſs are the effects of that goodneſs and compaſſio which he exerciſed in the world. He did it all purel for our ſakes; whereas all the good we do to others, a greater good done to ourſelves.

So that here is an example and experiment of th thing in the greateſt and moſt famous inſtance that th whole world can afford. The beſt and happieſt ma that ever was, the Son of God and the Saviour of mer and who is the moſt worthy to be the pattern of a mankind, *went about doing good*, and governed his whol life, and all the actions of it, by this principle, that *it i more bleſſed to give, than to receive. Let the ſame min be in us that was in Jeſus Chriſt: let us go and do like wiſe.*

SERMON CCXIV.

The evil of corrupt communication.

EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers.

AS diſcourſes againſt ſin and vice in general are of great uſe, ſo it is likewiſe very neceſſary to level them againſt the particular vices of men, and to endeavour by proper and intrinſical arguments, taken from the nature of that vice we treat of, to diſſuade and deter them from it; becauſe this carries the diſcourſe home to the conſciences of men, and leaves them no way of eſcape. For this reaſon, and in compliance with their Majeſties pious proclamation, for the diſcountenancing and ſuppreſſing of profaneneſs and vice, I have choſen to treat upon this ſubject, of corrupt and filthy communication, as being one of the reigning vices of this wicked and adulterous generation; of the evil whereof

hereof the generality of men are leſs ſenſible than al-
oſt of any other, that is ſo frequently and ſo expreſs-
branded in ſcripture. And to this purpoſe I have
tched upon the words which I have read unto you, as
ontaining a plain and expreſs prohibition of this vice,
et no corrrupt communication, &c.

I remember St Auſtin in one of his epiſtles tells us,
hat Tully, the great maſter of the art of ſpeaking, ſays
f one of the great orators, *Nullum unquam verbum
uod revocare vellet, emiſit:* "That no word ever fell
from him, that he could wiſh to have recalled." This,
doubt, is above the perfection of human eloquence, for
man always to make ſuch a choice of his words, and
o place them ſo fitly, that nothing he ever ſaid could
e changed for the better. But the greateſt faults of
peech are not thoſe which offend againſt the rules of
eloquence; but of piety, and virtue, and good manners:
and who can ſay that his tongue is free from all faults
in this kind, and *no word ever proceeded from him, which
he could wiſh to have recalled? In many things*, ſays
St James, chap. iii. 2. *we offend all;* and in this kind
as much perhaps, and as often as in any. He is a good
and a happy man indeed, that ſeldom or never offends
with his tongue. *If any man*, as St James goes on, *of-
fend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man;* that is, he
hath attained to an eminent degree of virtue indeed,
and is above the common rate of men, and may reaſon-
ably be preſumed blameleſs in the general courſe of his
life and practice; *and able*, as it follows, *to bridle
the whole body;* that is, *to order his whole converſation
aright.*

To govern the tongue is a matter of great difficulty,
and conſequently of great wiſdom, and care, and cir-
cumſpection; and therefore one of the great endeavours
of a wiſe and good man, ſhould be to govern his
words by the rules of reaſon and religion; and we
ſhould every one of us reſolve and ſay, as David does,
Pſal. xxxix. 1. *I will take heed to my ways, that I ſin not
with my tongue.* For as the virtues, ſo the vices of the
tongue are many and great. In reſpect of the virtues of
it, David calls it the beſt member we have; becauſe, of
all the members and inſtruments of the body, it is
capable

capable of giving the greateſt glory to God, and o doing the greateſt good and benefit to men. And in reſpect of the vices of it, it may be as truly ſaid to be the worſt member that we have; becauſe it is capable of doing the greateſt diſhonour to God, and the greateſt miſchief and harm among men. So that, upon all accounts, we ought to have a great care of the government of our tongue, which is capable of being ſo uſeful and ſerviceable to the beſt and worſt purpoſes, according as we reſtrain it and keep it in order, or let it looſe to ſin and folly.

And among all the vices of the tongue, as none is more common, ſo none is more miſbecoming, and more contrary to the modeſty of a man, and the gravity of a Chriſtian, than filthy and obſcene talk; of the odious nature, and the evil and miſchievous conſequences thereof, both to ourſelves and others, I deſign, by God's aſſiſtance, to treat at this time, from the words which I have read unto you, *Let no corrupt communication*, &c.

That by *corrupt* or *rotten communication*, is here meant filthy and obſcene talk, is generally agreed among interpreters. By *that which is good to the uſe of edifying*, is meant ſuch diſcourſe as is apt to build us up in knowledge and goodneſs, to make the hearers wiſer and better. *That it may miniſter grace unto the hearers*, that is, ſuch kind of diſcourſe as is acceptable to all; not nauſeous and offenſive to ſober and virtuous perſons, not apt to grate upon chaſte and modeſt ears, and to put the hearers out of countenance.

So that the Apoſtle doth here ſtrictly forbid all lewd and filthy diſcourſe among Chriſtians; and injoins them ſo to converſe with one another, that all their diſcourſes may miniſter mutual benefit and advantage to one another, and tend to the promoting of piety and virtue; and may likewiſe be grateful to the hearers, carefully avoiding every thing that might put them to the bluſh, or any wiſe treſpaſs upon modeſty and good manners, as all filthy communication does.

This ſort of argument, though it be frequently mentioned in ſcripture, yet it is very ſeldom treated of in the pulpit, becauſe it is a matter hard to be handled

in

a cleanly manner, and the preacher must always take ood heed to himself, that his discourse be free from the ntagion of that vice, which he reproves, and designs correct and cure. And therefore to dissuade and de- r men from this evil practice, so rife and common in e world, and that not only among the profane and solute sort of persons, but those likewise who would em to be more strict and religious, I hope it may be fficient to all considerate persons, plainly to represent them the hainous nature of the thing itself, together ith the evil and dangerous consequences of it, both to urselves and to others. And this I shall endeavour to o in the most general and wary terms, keeping all along, s much as is possible, aloof and at distance from any hing that might either offend the chaste and modest, or nfect lewd and dissolute minds, which like tinder are lways ready to take fire at the least spark.

Having premised this in general, my work at this ime shall be to offer such particular considerations, as nay fully convince men of the great evil and danger of his practice; and I hope may effectually prevail with hem to leave it, and break it off. And they shall be hese following.

I. That all filthy and corrupt communication is evilently contrary to nature, which is careful to hide and uppress whatever in the general esteem of the sober art of mankind hath any thing of turpitude and uncomeiness in it: and where-ever nature hath thought fit to raw a veil, we should neither by words nor actions exose such things to open view. *Quæ natura occultavit*, ays Tully, de offic. lib. i. *eadem omnes, qui sana sunt nente, removent ab oculis:* "Those things which na- "ture hath thought fit to hide, all men that are in their "wits endeavour to keep out of sight." *Nos autem naturam sequamur*, says the same excellent moralist, *ibid. & ab omni quod abhorret ab oculorum auriumque approbatione fugiamus:* "Let us, says he, follow nature, and flee "every thing that is offensive either to the eyes or ears "of men." And this is so plain a lesson of nature, that an actor in a play will never fall into that absurdity, as to represent a grave and virtuous person offering any obscene or immodest word: and as the same author rea-

ſons, *Hiſtrio hoc videbit in ſcena, quod non videbit ſapiens in vita?* "Shall an actor ſee this to be improper upon "the ſtage, and a wiſe man not diſcern the abſurdity "and indecency of it in his life and converſation?"

II. All corrupt and filthy communication is a notorious abuſe of one of the greateſt and beſt gifts which God hath given us, and does directly contradict the natural end and uſe of ſpeech. Our tongue is our glory, as the holy pſalmiſt often calls it, who had duly conſidered the excellency and uſe of this faculty, and took great care to employ it to the purpoſes to which God gave it, and is herein an admirable pattern to us.

And next to our reaſon and underſtanding, our ſpeech doth moſt remarkably diſtinguiſh us from the beaſts, and ſets us above them. *Hoc uno præſtamus vel maxime feris, quod colloquimur inter nos, & quod exprimere dicendo ſenſa poſſumus*, ſays the great Roman orator, Cicero, de orat. lib. i. "By this one thing we excel the beaſts in a "very high degree, that we can talk together, and by "ſpeech declare our minds to one another." By our underſtandings we know God, and by our tongues we confeſs and praiſe him: but to uſe our tongues to lewd and filthy diſcourſe, is to pervert and abuſe one of the beſt and nobleſt faculties which God hath given us: it is to affront him with his own gifts, and to fight againſt him with his own weapons. *Do we thus requite the Lord? fooliſh creatures and unthankful!*

The two great ends for which this faculty of ſpeech is given us, are to glorify God our maker, and to edify man our neighbour: but all *corrupt communication* contradicts both theſe ends; becauſe, inſtead of praiſing God with pure hearts and lips, we do greatly diſhonour him, by polluting our tongues with lewd and filthy talk: for hereby we offer a direct affront to his holy nature and laws. This renders us altogether unfit for the worſhip and ſervice of almighty God, who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity* and impurity of any kind. For how can we think that he will accept thoſe prayers and praiſes, which are offered to him by ſuch impure and unhallowed lips? when we diſhonour God with the ſame mouth that we pretend to glorify him; and commit ſin with the ſame tongue that we confeſs it? How

can

n we hope that he will accept the sacrifice of such polted lips, out of which proceed things so contrary and consistent?

Those who thus pervert the use of speech, and inead of glorifying him who gave them this excellent ft, and setting forth his praise, defile their tongues ith filthy and impure language, give just occasion to mplain of them, as Elihu does of the wicked in his me, Job xxxv. 10. 11. *None saith, Where is God my aker, who giveth songs in the night? Who teacheth us ore than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser an the fowls of heaven.* His meaning is, that they id not glorify God their maker, by singing his praises; which, by being endued with this noble faculty of speech, which he had denied to the creatures below man, the easts and birds), they only were capable of performing. The consideration of this high privilege, by which we do so much excel the creatures below us, ought to be a mighty obligation upon us, to employ this gift of God n the service, and to the glory of the giver, and make us very careful not to offend him by it, or by any defilement of it, to render it unfit for one of the principal uses for which God bestowed it upon us.

Another great end of speech is to edify our neighbour. So the Apostle here tells us in the text, that nothing should *proceed out of our mouths*, but what is *good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* But instead of that, corrupt communication offends the chaste and virtuous, and corrupts them who have vitious inclinations, by exciting and cherishing lewd imaginations in them, and making *them that are filthy more filthy still.*

III. Corrupt communication is an evidence of a corrupt and impure heart, as polluted streams are a sign that the fountain is impure from whence they came. An impure mind may be covered and disguised by natural shame and outward reverence, in regard to the company, or from some other particular design; but when it breaks out at any time in lewd talk, our speech betrays us, and discovers the inward thoughts of our hearts, and makes them visible to every eye. For, as our Saviour says, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*

ſpeaketh, Matth. xii. 34. 35. *How can ye, being ev ſpeak good things? For out of the abundance of the hea the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man, out of the good tre ſure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure, bringeth forth evil thing*

"There is not," ſays an excellent divine of our own Dr Barrow, "a more certain ſign of a mind utterly "debauched from piety and virtue, than affecting ſuch "talk. A vain mind naturally venteth itſelf in froth "diſcourſe; and luſt, boiling within, foams out in ſi "thy talk." It is St Jude's metaphor; when he deſcribes that impure ſect of the Gnoſtics, he ſays of them, that *they were continually foaming out their own ſhame*, ver. 23.; that is, by their lewd words and deeds they diſcovered the inward filthineſs of their heart. And therefore it is Tully's advice to him that would be perfectly virtuous, and not defective in any part of his duty, *Imprimis provideat, ne ſermo vitium aliquod indicet ineſſe moribus;* de offic. lib. i. "Let him in the "firſt place, ſays he, take great care, that his ſpeech be "tray not ſome vice or fault in his manners." Ἀνδρὸς χαρακτὴρ ἐκ λόγου γνωρίζεται, "A man's character is com "monly taken from his talk." Οἷος ὁ τρόπος, τοιοῦτος καὶ λόγος, ſays Ariſtides, "Such as are the manners of a "man, ſuch is his diſcourſe;" and Quinctilian, lib. xi c. 1. *Profert enim mores plerumque oratio, et animi ſecreta detegit, nec ſine cauſa Græci prodiderunt, ut vivit quemquam etiam dicere:* "Our ſpeech, for the moſt "part, declares our manners, and diſcovers the ſecrets "of our hearts; ſo that not without cauſe was it be "come a proverbial ſaying among the Greeks, that "as the man lives, ſo alſo he ſpeaks." And to the ſame purpoſe the wiſe ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xxvii. 6. 7. *The fruit declareth, if the tree hath been dreſſed; ſo is the utterance of a conceit in the heart of man. Praiſe no man before thou heareſt him ſpeak: for this is the trial of men.* And ver. 13. *The diſcourſe of fools is irkſome, and their ſport is in the wantonneſs of ſin.*

Immodeſt ſpeech is not only an indication of an unchaſte mind; but draws likewiſe a great ſuſpicion upon a man's life. So ſtrict a connection commonly is there between a man's thoughts and words, and between his

words

words and actions, that they are generally presumed to be all of a piece, and agreeable to one another

IV. Corrupt communication doth debauch and defile the minds of men, and that not only of the speaker, but likewise of the hearer of such discourse; because it gratifies and feeds a corrupt humour, and a vitiated appetite, beside that it disposeth and inclines to lewd and filthy actions: a smutty tongue and unchaste deeds are seldom far asunder, and do very often go together; for filthy talk and lewd practices seem only to differ in the occasion and opportunity; and he that makes no conscience of the one, will hardly stick at the other, when it can be done with secrecy and safety. The law of God forbids both alike, and his eye beholds both: *For there is not a word in my tongue,* says David, Psal. cxxxix. *but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.* So that whatever may deter us from lewd practice (the authority of God forbidding it, or the awe of his presence, who continually stands by us, and hears and sees all that we say and do) is of equal force to restrain us from lewd and filthy words: for they both proceed from the same ill disposition of mind, and are done in equal contempt of the divine presence and authority.

V. It is uncivil and unmannerly, very disagreeable, and highly displeasing to all sober and modest persons. It is a clownish and rude thing, says Tully, de offic. lib. *Si rerum turpitudini adhibetur verborum obscœnitas:* "If to things which are immodest in themselves, we add the obscenity of words."

Nothing that trespasses upon the modesty of the company, and the decency of conversation, can become the mouth of a wise and virtuous person. This kind of conversation would fain pass for wit among some sort of persons, to whom it is acceptable; but whatever savours of rudeness, and immodesty, and ill manners, is very far from deserving that name; and they that are sober and virtuous, cannot entertain any discourse of this kind with approbation and acceptance: A well-bred person will never offend in this way; and therefore it cannot but be esteemed as an affront to modest company, and a rude presuming upon their approbation,

impudently taking it for granted that all others are lewd and dissolute as themselves.

This sort of conversation was not only offensive righteous Lot, but was a perpetual vexation to h and grieved him at his very heart. So St Peter t us, 2 Pet. ii. 7. 8. that *Lot was vexed with the fi conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man dw ing among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his ri teous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. seeing and hearing*, that is, in seeing their lewd actio and hearing their filthy talk, his life became a bur to him; and therefore God singled him out, and de vered him both from that wicked company, and fr that dreadful judgment of fire and brimstone, whi came down from heaven upon them, and consumed th with an utter destruction, for an example to all ag and an admonition to all good men, that they oug to be in like manner affected, as righteous Lot w with *the filthy conversation of the wicked.*

VI. As by this practice we offend against nature, a reason and true morality; so it is likewise a direct co tempt and defiance of the Christian religion, which do so strictly forbid, and so severely condemn it in Ch tians. Our blessed Saviour seems more particularly t censure and condemn this vice, when he says, Matth xii. 36. 37. *That every idle word that men shall spea they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgmen Every idle word*, ῥῆμα ἀργὸν, *every vain and unprofitab word*, that nowise tends to edification; that is the ver lowest sense the words can bear. But then how muc more shall we give an account in that day of *every lew word*, which tends to corrupt and debauch the mind and manners of men? Some copies have it, ῥῆμα πονηρὸ *every naughty and wicked word*, every false, and malici ous, and calumniating word. "An idle word," says S Basil, "is that which is not for edification, and such "words shall come under examination in that grea "assembly of the whole world; and what then," say he, "shall be done to words of scurrility, and calum- "ny, and obscenity?"

But that which will best direct us to the meaning o this phrase, is what the Jewish masters observed, that by

y *an idle word* the Jews did commonly understand *immodest and unchaste speech, scurrilous and obscene words.* nd then it follows, *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

Men are commonly apt to make a very light matter f such words; but because they shew the mind and nanners of the man, his inward temper and disposition, herefore men shall be called to a strict account for them n the day of judgment, and be condemned for lewd and lissolute words, as well as for acts of filthiness and uncleanness; because *these come from the heart, and defile the man,* hey proceed from an impure spring and fountain; and though we only perceive them to come out of the nouth, yet they proceed *out of the abundance of the heart,* from an evil disposition of mind.

So that our judge hath expressly warned us of this fault, and declared to us the danger of it. And therefore whosoever believes this declaration of our Saviour, and dreads the judgment of the great day, ought to take heed that he offend not with his tongue, in this or any other kind. Men make but little account of such words now, but they shall all be strictly accounted for another day; and what we utter now so freely and without blushing, will then strike us dumb, and be matter of greatest shame and confusion to us, in the presence of God and his holy angels.

And so St Paul likewise, not only here in the text, does forbid and reprove this practice, when he says, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers:* but in several other places of his epistles he most severely condemns it, as utterly misbecoming Christians, and most directly contrary to our most holy profession. Eph. v. 2. 4. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.* Here he forbids all lewd and filthy talk, as utterly misbecoming the conversation of Christians, who should give no occasion to have the vices of this nature so much as once mentioned, much less practised among Christians: *Let not these things,* says he, *be*

once

once named among you, as becometh saints; but rather giving of thanks. Here he directs us to that which is the proper employment of the tongue, and one of the chief ends of speech; which is to praise and glorify God, and not to dishonour him by lewd and filthy talk. And this he urgeth again, as the proper fruit of our lips, ver. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And, at the 5th verse of this chapter, he appeals to Christians, whether they had not been constantly taught and instructed, that all lewdness and filthiness, not only in act but in word, will certainly shut men out of the kingdom of heaven. *For this,* says he, *ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person* (referring to those several sorts of uncleanness he had mentioned before, among which is *filthy and foolish talk*) *hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.* The Apostle here speaks to the Gentile Christians, who were newly converted from Heathenism, and had been accustomed to make slight of these kinds of sin, which were so common among the idolatrous Heathen, and part of the worship of their obscene deities: but he tells them, that the Christian religion, which they had embraced, required another sort of conversation, and did strictly injoin all manner of purity, both of heart and life, in all our words and actions; and that *as he that has called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation.* And whatever false teachers might insinuate, as if the Christian religion did allow a greater liberty in these things, and made that *a cloak for licentiousness, hereby turning the grace of God,* that is, the doctrine of the gospel, *into lasciviousness,* as St Jude speaks, ver. 4. yet they would certainly find things quite otherwise in the issue, and that God, who punished the Heathen for these vices, and sent such terrible judgments upon them, would much less let Christians go unpunished, that should be found guilty of them. Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,* that is, the Heathen world, who continued still in their infidelity, and lived in the practice of those sins; and would fall much more heavily upon

ion Christians, if after they had embraced this holy ligion, they should allow themselves in any of those e and impure practices, which they had been guilty before, and which they had so solemnly promised to nounce and put off in their baptism.

And so likewise, Col. iii. 5. 6. 7. *Mortify therefore ur members which are upon the earth; fornication, unleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the rath of God cometh on the children of disobedience,* or nbelief; *in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye ved in them;* that is, whilst ye were Heathens, and nverſed among them, ye practised these vices: *but ow,* that is, now that ye are become Christians, *put f these, anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, filthy communication.* Ye see that *filthy communication* is reckoned mongst those sins of the Gentiles, which Christians ere utterly to quit and forsake, as contrary to the puty of the Christian profession. And so St Paul tells he Thessalonians, 1 Thess. iv. 7. *God hath not called s unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.* And he gives the me precept to the Colossians, chap. iv. 6. *Let your peech be always with grace,* that is, acceptable and useful, something that is worthy the hearing, *seasoned with salt,* that is, with prudence and discretion, which should always govern our speech, and keep it within the bounds of sobriety and modesty. As our talk should not be nsipid and foolish, so much less rotten and unsavoury, mmodest and lewd.

And in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. iv. 8. he earnestly recommends the virtues that are directly contrary to this vice. *Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are honest,* ὅσα σεμνὰ, *whatsoever things are grave or venerable,* ὅσα ἁγνὰ, *whatsoever things are pure or chaste, think on these things;* that is, have great regard to them in your conversation and behaviour, there being no sort of virtue which the Christian religion does not strictly injoin and exact from us; and consequently whatsoever is light and frothy, and much more whatever is lewd and filthy, ought to be banished from the conversation of Christians, as utterly inconsistent with the gravity and purity of that holy profession.

And

And the same Apostle tells us, that all the promises the gospel are so many arguments and obligatio to purity and holiness, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having theref these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselv from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting,* practising, *holiness in the fear of God.* And on t contrary, St John tells us, that all impurity will be effectual bar to our entrance into heaven. Rev. x 27. speaking of the new Jerusalem, says he, *Th shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, n ther whatsoever worketh abomination.* So that if eith the promises or threatenings of the gospel have any i fluence upon us, they will effectually restrain this v tious practice.

VII. and lastly, All impure and filthy communic tion grieves the Holy Spirit, and drives him away fro us. And therefore after he had forbidden this vi here in the text, that *no corrupt communication proceed o of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifyin that it may minister grace unto the hearers;* he imm diately adds, *and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, wher by ye are sealed to the day of redemption;* hereby int mating, that all corrupt and filthy communicatio grieves the Holy Spirit of God, that blessed Spirit whi is *the seal and earnest of our redemption;* that is, as t Apostle himself explains it, of *the redemption of our b dies from the bondage of corruption,* by the resurrectio of them to eternal life. For it is the Spirit of Go dwelling in us, which shall raise our bodies at the la day, and make them partakers of a blessed immortality So the Apostle says expressly, Rom. viii. 11. *But if t Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwe in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall al quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth i you.* If we defile our bodies, or any members of ther by uncleanness, we grieve the Spirit of God whic dwells in us, and force him out of his habitation; tha blessed Spirit, which should quicken our mortal bodie and is both the earnest and the cause of their resurrec tion to eternal life. For our bodies, as well as our souls are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of Go dwell

dells in them; and we baniſh him out of his temple whenever we profane it by lewd and filthy ſpeech.

And the Apoſtle uſeth this argument more than once, t deter Chriſtians more eſpecially from the ſins of uncanneſs. 1 Cor. iii. 16. 17. *Know ye not that ye are t temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in yu? If any man defile the temple of God, him ſhall God ſtroy · for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye e.* The Holy Spirit of God ſanctifieth the place where more eſpecially reſides, and makes it his temple; d ſo are our bodies as well as our ſouls; as the ſame poſtle expreſsly tells us, chap. vi. ver. 18. 19. 20. here he argues againſt the ſins of uncleanneſs, which e committed in the body, and by the members and ſtruments of it, from this conſideration, that our boes are the temples of the Holy Ghoſt. *Flee fornication,* ſays he. *Every ſin a man doth, is without the dy: but he that committeth fornication, ſinneth againſt s own body;* that is, the body is not the immediate ſtrument of other ſins, as it is of thoſe of uncleanneſs; nd then it follows, *What, know ye not that your body is e temple of the Holy Ghoſt which is in you, which ye ve of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought ith a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and n your ſpirit, which are God's.* Under the name of rnication the Apoſtle comprehends all the ſins of uncleanneſs, of which any member of the body is an ſtrument; ſo that the laſciviouſneſs of the eye, or ar, or tongue, is a polluting and profaning this emple of God, and drives the Holy Spirit of God out f his poſſeſſion.

And whenever the Spirit of God departs from us, ve ceaſe to be children of God, and forfeit the carneſt f our eternal inheritance. *Now, if any man have not he Spirit of Chriſt,* ſays the ſame Apoſtle, Rom. viii. . *he is none of his*; that is, he does not belong to im; in plain Engliſh, he is no Chriſtian. So that, as we would not forfeit the title of Chriſtians, and the bleſſed hope of a glorious reſurrection, we muſt be very careful that *no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth,* leſt hereby *we grieve the Holy Spirit*

of

of God, by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

I have now done with this argument; and what I ha
said concerning immodest and unchaste words, is of equ
force against lascivious books, and pictures, and play
all which do alike intrench upon natural modesty, a
for that reason are equally forbidden and condemned
the Christian religion; and therefore it may suffice
have named them. I shall only speak a few wo
concerning plays, which, as they are now ordered
mong us, are a mighty reproach to the age and natio

To speak against them in general, may be thoug
too severe, and that which the present age cannot
well brook, and would not perhaps be so just and re
sonable; because it is very possible they might be
framed, and governed by such rules, as not only to
innocently diverting, but instructing and useful, to p
some vices and follies out of countenance, which ca
not perhaps be so decently reproved, nor so effectual
exposed and corrected any other way. But as the sta
now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permi
ted in a civilized, much less in a Christian natio
They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity a
vice. By the profaneness of them, they are apt to i
still bad principles into the minds of men, and to less
the awe and reverence which all men ought to have f
God and religion: and by their lewdness they teac
vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and di
pose them to lewd and dissolute practices.

And therefore I do not see how any person, pretend
ing to sobriety and virtue, and especially to the pur
and holy religion of our blessed Saviour, can, witho
great guilt, and open contradiction to his holy profe
sion, be present at such lewd and immodest plays, muc
less frequent them, as too many do, who yet woul
take it very ill to be shut out of the communion o
Christians, as they would most certainly have bee
in the first and purest ages of Christianity.

To conclude this whole discourse: Let us always re
member that gravity and modesty in all our behaviou
and conversation, in all our words and actions, are du
ties indispensably required by the Christian religion, and
the

le great fences of piety and virtue; and therefore ght, with great conſcience and care, to be preſerved d kept inviolable: and when theſe fences are once oken down, there is a wide gap made for almoſt any and vice to enter in. Immodeſt words do naturally nd *to corrupt good manners*, both in ourſelves and hers.

There is none of us, but would reckon it a very great felicity to be deprived of that noble and uſeful facul- of ſpeech, which is ſo peculiar to man, and which, xt to our reaſon and underſtanding, doth moſt re- rkably diſtinguiſh us from the brute beaſts: but it is nuch greater unhappineſs to have this faculty, and abuſe it to vile and lewd purpoſes. The firſt may only our misfortune: but this can never be without eat fault, and groſs neglect of ourſelves; and much tter had it been for us to have been born dumb, than us to turn our glory into ſhame and guilt, by per- rting this excellent gift of God, to the corrupting rſelves and others.

This, I hope, may be ſufficient to reſtrain men from is vice, which I have all this while been ſpeaking a- inſt; at leaſt to preſerve thoſe which are not yet in- ted, from the contagion of it; and, I hope, to reclaim ny from ſo bad a practice. And if any be ſo harden- in their lewd courſe, that no counſel of this kind can ke impreſſion on them, what remains, but to con- ide in the words of the angel to St John, Rev. xxii. 1. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill: and he that holy, let him be holy ſtill.*

SERMON CCXV.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of lif

JOHN XIV. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, l
lieve alſo in me.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

IN which words our bleſſed Saviour does, upon particular occaſion, preſcribe an univerſal reme againſt trouble. And the particular occaſion of t conſolatory diſcourſe, which our Saviour here makes his diſciples, was this. He had often told them of ſufferings: but the conceit which they had entertai of his temporal reign, would not ſuffer them to ad any thought of ſuch a thing, as the ſufferings or de of the Meſſias; and therefore it is ſaid, that *theſe thi did not ſink into them*, and that *they underſtood them n* men being generally very ſlow to underſtand what th do not like, and have no mind to. At laſt our Sa vour tells them plainly, that how backward ſoever th were to believe it, the time of his ſufferings and de was now approaching, and that he ſhould ſhortly be trayed into the hands of men, and be crucified a ſlain. At this his diſciples were ſtruck with great fe and exceedingly troubled, both in contemplation of ſufferings, and of their own invaluable loſs. To co fort them upon this occaſion, our Saviour directs his ſciples to that courſe, which was not only proper in th preſent caſe, but is an univerſal antidote and rem againſt all trouble whatſoever, and will not only ſe to mitigate our trouble, and ſupport our ſpirits un the fear and apprehenſion of future evils, but un preſent afflictions and ſufferings; and to quiet and co

rt our minds under the ſaddeſt condition, and foreſt lamities that can befal us. *Let not your heart be oubled: ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.*

He does not only forbid them to be troubled, and ounſel them againſt it; ſuch advice is eaſily given, but ot ſo eaſily to be followed: but he preſcribes the pro-r remedy againſt trouble, which is truſt and confidence God the great Creator and wiſe Governor of the orld; and likewiſe in himſelf, the bleſſed Son of God, nd Saviour of mankind: *Ye believe in God, believe alſo n me.*

The words are variouſly tranſlated: by ſome indica-vely, *Ye do believe in God, and ye do believe in me*, herefore *be not troubled*; by others imperatively, *Be-eve in God, and believe likewiſe in me*; and then you an have no cauſe of trouble. Or elſe the firſt clauſe hay be rendered indicatively, and the latter imperative-y; and ſo our tranſlation renders the words, *Ye do elieve in God, believe alſo in me*; as *you believe in God* he Creator and Governor of the world, ſo *believe alſo n me* the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But which way ſoever the words be rendered, the ſenſe comes all to one; that faith in God, and in our bleſſed Saviour, are here preſcribed as the proper and moſt powerful remedies againſt trouble: *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.*

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider what ſort of trouble is here for-bidden, or with what reaſonable limitations this general prohibition of our Saviour is to be underſtood, *Let not your heart be troubled.*

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew what virtue and force there is in the remedy here preſcribed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to ſupport and quiet our minds under it.

Firſt, We will conſider what ſort of trouble is here forbidden, and with what due and reaſonable limitations we are to underſtand this general prohibition of our Saviour to his diſciples, *Let not your hearts be troubled.* And this we ſhall beſt find out by conſidering the various objects of trouble, together with the ſeveral cauſes or

grounds of them. And these may all be ranged under these three heads; evils past, present, or to come. For the ground of all trouble is some evil, either really and in itself so, or what is apprehended by us under that notion: and the several kinds of trouble, are either the reflection upon evils past, or the sense of an evil that is present, or the fear and apprehension of some future evil which threatens us and hangs over us.

I. For the first, The trouble caused by reflection upon evils past, this must either be the evil of affliction or sin. The former of these, when it is past, is seldom any cause of trouble, the remembrance of past sufferings, and the evils which we got over, being rather delightful than grievous; so that it is only the evil of sin, the reflection whereof is troublesome. And this is that which we call guilt; which is an inward vexation, and discontent, and grief of mind, arising from the consciousness that we have done amiss, and a fearful apprehension of some vengeance and punishment that will follow it; and there is no trouble that is comparable to this, when the conscience of a sinner is thoroughly awakened.

Now upon this account our hearts ought to be troubled, and we can hardly exceed in it, provided our trouble do not drive us to despair, but to repentance; but there can be no suspicion that this comes within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition.

II. As for the troubles caused by the sense of the present evils, either of loss or suffering, though this do properly enough fall within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition, *Let not your heart be troubled*, yet it admits of several limitations: therefore, in order to the fixing of its due and proper bounds, I shall briefly shew, what trouble for present evils and afflictions which are upon us, is not forbidden, and what is.

1. We are not here forbidden to have a just and due sense of any evil or calamity that is upon us; because this is natural, and we cannot help it: for there is a real difference of things in themselves; some things are in their nature good and convenient for us, and agreeable and delightful to our senses; and other things are in themselves evil, that is, naturally displeasing and grievous;

grievous; and we must not only be Stoics, but even blocks and stones, if we have not a just sense and resentment of this difference. Our blessed Saviour had so; and as he was afflicted more than any man, and suffered more than any of the sons of men, so was he likewise very sensible of his sufferings, and had a natural dread and horror of them; insomuch that he himself tells us, that *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to death*, upon the apprehension of what he was to undergo; which made him pray so earnestly, and to repeat that petition so often, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* Nay, the very anguish of his mind, caused by the dread and horror of his sufferings, was so great as to force his blood through the pores of his body, so that *he sweat as it were thick drops of blood falling upon the ground.*

And this is not to be wondered at, because our blessed Saviour, as he had the greatest endowments of human nature in their greatest perfection, so he had a perfect sense of the evils, and pains, and sufferings of it. And all philosophy that will not acknowledge loss, and pain, and suffering, to be evils, and troublesome and terrible, is either obstinate sullenness, or gross hypocrisy.

2. Nor doth this prohibition of our Saviour exclude natural affection. This is a plant which God himself hath planted in human nature, and that for very excellent ends and purposes: and having made us men, and endowed us with such passions, he does not expect that we should put off our nature, and transform ourselves into another sort of creatures than what we were when we came out of his own hands. To be without natural affection, and to have no afflictive sense of the loss of nearest relations, is condemned in scripture, as a mark of the greatest degeneracy and depravation of human nature. And therefore we cannot imagine that our Saviour did intend to forbid such a moderate and well-regulated degree of trouble upon these occasions, as is the proper and genuine issue of those natural affections, which God himself hath implanted in us.

3. When our Saviour forbids us to be troubled, he doth not forbid us to have a just sense of God's judgments, or of his hand, in procuring or permitting the evils

which befal us: much less of our own sins, which a the meritorious cause of them; nay, on the contrar he expects that we should acknowledge his providenc and the justness of it, in his severest dealings with us that we should be *humbled under his mighty hand, and tur to him that smites us*, and *bear the indignation of the Lor patiently, because we have sinned against him.* Wha ever is a sign of God's displeasure against us, is a ju and reasonable cause of trouble to us.

But when our Saviour here forbids us to be troubled he plainly intends to prohibit these three things.

1. Immoderate grief and sorrow for any present af fliction or loss, without any restraint upon ourselves, a as to let the grief loose, and to give full scope to it, t let the reins fall out of our hands, so that the conside rations of reason and religion have no manner of powe and command over us; to sorrow, as Rachel did *fo her children, refusing to be comforted.* This is unreason able, and usually of pernicious consequence: for no man knows, when he once abandons himself to melancholy and gives way to grief, and lets it pierce his heart, and enter into his soul, how it may overwhelm his spirit and sink it past recovery. And to this pitch the trouble of some men for worldly losses and disappoint ments, because it was not restrained and governed at first, hath brought them; and it often happens, as St Paul hath observed, the *trouble of the world worketh death.*

I think hardly any man did ever die of grief for his sins, and killed himself by laying them to heart. It is well if our sorrow for sin proceed to that degree, as to work real repentance and amendment. And the reason why our sorrow for sin is commonly moderate and within bounds, is because the sorrow and trouble of repentance is always reasonable, and reason keeps our grief within bounds: but *the sorrow of the world*, that is, of covetous and worldly-minded men, who have unreasonably set their affections upon this world, hath nothing to set bounds and give limits to it. And therefore, by the just judgment of God, it sometimes proceeds so far as *to work death.* Many mens hearts have been broken for the loss of an estate, or some great cross and dis-

appointment

appointment in their worldly affairs and designs. Thus Cabal, upon the very apprehension of the danger that he and his estate were in, and had so narrowly escaped, was struck with grief to the degree of stupidity, so that *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone;* and in few days he died of that grief.

2. We are not to be troubled for present afflictions and sufferings to the degree of impatience and discontent, as to fret and murmur in our hearts against God, and *charge him foolishly*, as if he dealt hardly with us, and had not a due regard for us, and an equal consideration of our case. For we are all sinners, and always deserve to suffer; and therefore whatever temporal evils befal the best men in this world, they are always *less than their iniquities have deserved:* and yet men are very prone to censure and find fault with God, for the evils and calamities which they draw down upon themselves. So Solomon observes, Prov. xix. 3. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.* We suffer for our own sins and follies, and then are angry with God because we suffer. God is angry with us for our sins; and when he is angry with us, and *lifts up his hand against us*, it becomes us *to humble ourselves under his mighty hand;* for *who can stand before him when once he is angry?* But we have no cause to fret against him, for the evils which we bring upon ourselves: besides, that fretting is not the way to relieve and ease us, but to vex and gall us the more.

3. As to the fear and apprehension of future evils, though we ought to have a just sense of them, yet we ought not to be dejected and troubled for them to the degree of despondency, so as to conclude ourselves miserable and forsaken, utterly lost and undone, and that our case is past all help and remedy: we should not be so dejected, as if we were destitute of all comfort, and utterly without hope. Hope lies at the bottom of the worst condition; for while we are not *without God*, we can never be *without hope;* so long as the government of the world is in so good hands, our case can never be desperate; and therefore we ought to rebuke the despondency of our spirits, as David did, Psal. xliii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted*

quieted within me? hope in God. And we should suppo ourselves in the greatest dangers and fears, as he di Psal. iii. 1. 2. 3. *Lord, how are they increased that trou me? how many are they that rise up against me? Ma there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in Go But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and th lifter up of my head.*

And this cause of trouble, upon the fear and appr hension of future evils, was the case of the disciple who were mightily dejected and disturbed, upon the a prehension of the destitute condition they should be upon our Saviour's departure from them; that the should be exposed to a malicious world, without manner of protection from those innumerable evils an dangers which threatened them. And this I shall hav most particular respect to in my following discourse, being more particularly intended by our Saviour, an being one of the most common causes of trouble in th world. I proceed therefore, in the

Second place, to consider, what force there is in th remedy here prescribed by our Saviour, to mitigate an allay our troubles, both in respect of our present evi and sufferings, and the danger and apprehension of fu ture evils, and to support and comfort our minds un der them. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believ in God, believe also in me.*

In which words our Saviour prescribes a double reme dy against trouble.

First, Faith in God, the great Creator and wise Go venor of the world: *Ye believe in God*, or, *Believe ye i God;* to which he adds, in the

Second place, Faith likewise in himself, the Son God, and the Saviour of men: *Ye believe in God, be lieve also in me.* Not as if faith in God were not a suffi cient ground of consolation and support of our minds but to acquaint us, that a firm faith in him who is th Son of God, and Saviour of the world, would very muc tend to confirm and strengthen our trust and confidenc in God; as will clearly appear, when I come to shew what peculiar considerations of comfort and support th Christian religion offers to us, beyond what the com mon light and reason of mankind, from the consider tio

th of the divine nature and perfections, does ſuggeſt tus. And to explain the full ſtrength and force of tſe two conſiderations, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, what conſiderations o comfort and ſupport the belief of a God, and the natal notions and acknowledgments of mankind conning him, do afford to good men, for the allaying al mitigating of their fears and troubles. And,

Secondly, What farther conſiderations faith in Chriſt, al the firm belief of the Chriſtian religion, do afford t this purpoſe. *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.*

Firſt, To ſhew, what conſiderations of comfort and ſport the belief of a God, and the natural notions al acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do ord to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of t ir fears and troubles; which I ſhall briefly deduce thus.

The firm belief and perſuaſion of a God does neceſſily infer the belief of his infinite power, and wiſdom, ad holineſs, and goodneſs; for theſe are neceſſary and ential perfections of the divine nature, without which v cannot conceive ſuch a being as God is. Now, from tſe eſſential perfections of the divine nature, theſe two inciples do naturally reſult.

I. That his providence governs the world, and adniſters the affairs of it, particularly of mankind, with eat goodneſs and wiſdom.

II. That his providence is more peculiarly concerned r good men, and that he hath a very tender and pecur care of them, and regard to them.

Now, theſe two principles, concerning which I have ſcourſed at large upon another occaſion *, afford us is fourfold ground of comfort, under all the evils that e labour under, and are afraid of.

I. If God govern the world, then we and all our inreſts and concernments are certainly in the beſt and feſt hands; and where, if we know how to wiſh well id wiſely for ourſelves, we ſhould deſire to have them; id therefore why ſhould our heart be troubled at ıy thing that doth or can befal us †?

* See Vol. 6. ſermon 138.

† See this matter alſo handled at large in the ſame ſermon.

II. Another

II. Another ground of comfort is, That if the pro dence of God have a particular regard to good men, favour for them, then we may be assured, that if we careful of our duty to God, and rely upon his goodn and refer ourselves to his pleasure, in the final issue result of things, all shall turn to our good, and conspi in our happiness: nay, if we make the best use of evils and afflictions which befal us, and bear them we ought, we ourselves may do a great deal to tu them to our benefit and advantage; to the bettering our minds, and the improvement of our virtues, a the increase of our reward. And why should we troubled so much at things which may prove so ma ways beneficial to us, if it be not our own fault? whi tend to our good, and will end in it, if we will but *patience have its perfect work*, as St James shews, cha v. 11. in the instance of Job, whose admirable patien had a glorious end and reward, even in this world *You have heard*, says he, *of the patience of Job, and the end God made with him; that the Lord is very pi ful and of tender mercy*. Job, upon a dunghill, is whit inferior to the most glorious prince that ever upon a throne. Some men have been more illustriou and, according to the true rate and value of things, mo considerable for their patience, and courage, and co stancy of mind in great afflictions and sufferings, tha the greatest pomp and prosperity in the world cou possibly have made them. Some have borne poverty and sickness, and reproach, and persecution, and exqu site pains and torments, with so much decency, wit such greatness of mind, and firmness of resolution, might justly provoke the envy of the greatest and wea thiest, and, to all outward appearance, the happiest per sons that ever were in the world. M. Antoninus wa an excellent good man, and perhaps the greatest Empe ror that ever was, for in his time the Roman empir was at its greatest extent; and yet it is hard to say whether Epictetus, whose example I proposed before and who lived about the same time with this great an good Emperor, I say, it is not easy to say, whether thi poor man Epictetus, who was depressed into the lowe and most afflicted condition, that human nature is al

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most capable of, were not, by reason of those admirable virtues which shined so brightly in that dark and dismal condition, his invincible patience, his perfect submission to the providence of God, the perpetual chearfulness and serenity, the unmoveable constancy and equality of his mind, according to a right estimation of things, the greater and more glorious person of the two.

So that good men are always secure, as to the main and the essentials of happiness; under all outward afflictions and sufferings of the body, they may still retain a wise and virtuous mind, which is *that good part which cannot be taken from them;* and if they retain that, they are sure of the favour of God, and the countenance of heaven, which alone is sufficient to make any condition happy.

III. Another ground of comfort is, That if God govern the world, he can either prevent and divert the greatest evils that threaten us, or if they come upon us, he can support us under them, and deliver us out of them: and if we be good, and it be for our good, he will do one of these for us; either he will prevent the evil, that it shall not come, if that be best for us; or if affliction fall heavy upon us, he will support us under it; and if our strength be increased in proportion to the weight of our burden, it is as well as if we had escaped it, may perhaps much better, considering the benefit and reward of it. But how grievous soever it be, he can, when he pleaseth, deliver us from it; and he will do it presently, if it be for our good; and if it be not, it is not really desirable to us to be so soon freed from it.

IV. and lastly, which is consequent upon the former particulars, It is certain upon the whole matter, and upon the balancing of all accounts, that in every condition good men have much more cause of comfort and joy, than of dejection and trouble. Let our fears be as great, and our present sufferings as heavy as they can, there are considerations of so great moment to be put into the other scale, as will infinitely outweigh them, and make them seem light. The consideration of our immortal duration in a future state, and of the endless and unspeakable happiness of another world, are of that solidity and weight, that *these light afflictions,*

afflictions, as the Apostle calls them, *which are but a moment, are in no wise worthy to be compared with t*

What though our passage through this world be ver so stormy and tempestuous, we shall at last ar at a safe port. Heaven is a sure sanctuary and ret from all the evils and afflictions which we are liable and which many times pursue us so close in this mo state. It is but exercising our faith and patience fo very little while, and all will be well with us; m better than if we had never been afflicted, and l been wholly exempted from all sorts of sufferings in t world. We have no pretence to *the crown of life* we do not overcome; and there can be no conqu without some conflict.

But because the Christian religion does give us t greatest, if not the only firm assurance of the happin of another life, which, when all is done, is the gr support and cordial of our fainting spirits, under t troubles and afflictions of this life, therefore I shall n now enlarge farther upon it, but refer it to the seco head of my discourse, which I proposed to speak to in t next place, *viz.* What farther considerations of cor fort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief the Christian religion, do afford to good men, for th allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. *L not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe a so in me.* But this I shall refer to some other opportu nity.

SER-

SERMON CCXVI.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have conſidered theſe words as an univerſal remedy againſt trouble: and in ſhewing what virtue and force there is in this remedy, I have conſidered,

Firſt, That faith in God is a proper and moſt powerful means to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to support and quiet our minds under it.

I now proceed, in the ſecond place, to ſhew what farther conſiderations of comfort and ſupport, faith in Chriſt, and the firm belief in the Chriſtian religion, do afford good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their greateſt fears and troubles. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.* I ſhall mention theſe five.

I. Faith in Chriſt, or the belief of the Chriſtian religion, gives us full and perfect aſſurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world.

II. It promiſeth to every ſincere Chriſtian the inward aſſiſtance, and ſupport, and comfort of God's Holy Spirit, to bear up the weakneſs of human nature under its heavieſt preſſures of fear, or grief, or pain.

III. It aſſures us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and ſupports of his grace under it.

IV. It propounds to us the beſt and moſt admirable pattern that ever was, of patience and conſtancy of mind under the apprehenſion of approaching evils, or

the ſenſe of preſent ſufferings; and of a contented a chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of God in the ſadd condition to which human nature is incident.

V. It aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and pr valent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and inte ceſſor with God for us.

I. Faith in Chriſt, or the doctrine of the Chriſti religion, gives a full and perfect aſſurance of immort lity, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of anoth world. Of this the world was very doubtful and u certain before, and had but obſcure and wavering a prehenſions about it. And though the generality of ma kind had naturally ſome glimmering apprehenſions another life after this, and ſecret hopes and expectatio of a future reward for good men that were hardly uſ in this world; yet the philoſophers had wrangled a diſputed the matter into ſo much uncertainty, th mankind was very much ſtaggered about it, and t doubts and difficulties that were raiſed about it did v ry much break the force, and weaken the influence ſo great and weighty a conſideration.

Thus it was among the Gentiles. And under t law of Moſes, though the Jews had ſuch apprehenſions their own immortality, and of a future ſtate of rewar and puniſhments, as natural light ſuggeſted to them yet that covenant and diſpenſation added but very litt to the clearing of theſe notions, and the ſtrengthenin of this perſuaſion in the minds of men; it did rath ſuppoſe it, than add any new ſtrength and force to it for under that diſpenſation the eyes of men were gen rally fixed upon temporal promiſes and threatenings though as the time of the Meſſias grew nearer, and t ſufferings of that people ſharper, they began to ha clearer apprehenſions of a reſurrection to another an better life; it being natural to men, when they a deſtitute of preſent comfort, to cheriſh and make muc of the future hopes of a better condition.

And therefore we find that the people of the Jew when they had been long exerciſed with great affliction began to comfort and ſupport themſelves with t hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection to a better life; as is vident from the hiſtory of the ſeven brethren in th Maccabees

accabees, who with great patience and courage bore
n under the moſt exquiſite torments, in confidence of
ing raiſed again to a bleſſed ſtate in another world.
nd of theſe it is that the Apoſtle certainly ſpeaks, Heb.
. 35. when he ſays, *that ſome were tortured, not accepting
liverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection.*
But the Apoſtle tells us expreſsly, 2 Tim. i. 10. that
e clear and certain diſcovery of a future ſtate is owing
o the Chriſtian religion, and *made manifeſt by the appear-
g of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who hath aboliſhed death,
nd brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.*
ot only natural light, but all the revelations which
od had made to the world before, had this weakneſs
nd imperfection in them, that they did not give men
he clear diſcovery and full aſſurance of another life;
nd conſequently had but little efficacy in compariſon
o engage men to their duty, or to ſupport and com-
ort them under ſufferings: and therefore the Apoſtle
o the Hebrews calls the goſpel, in oppoſition to the law,
he power of an endleſs life, Heb. vii. 16. intimating to
s, how great a force and influence the clear apprehen-
ons of another life are apt to have upon the minds of
nen. For which reaſon the ſame apoſtle tells us, ver.
8. 19. that the law was too weak to raiſe men to the
erfection of virtue and goodneſs, becauſe it did not
work ſtrongly enough upon the hopes of men, by the
reatneſs and clearneſs of its promiſes; and that for this
veakneſs it was removed, and a more powerful and a-
vakening diſpenſation brought in the place of it: *For
erily*, ſays he, *there is an annulling of the commandment
oing before*, meaning the law of Moſes, which by the
oſpel was abrogated and made void, *for the weakneſs
nd unprofitableneſs of it; for the law made nothing per-
ect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* For which
eaſon, chap. viii. 6. he calls the covenant of the go-
pel, *a better covenant*, becauſe *it was eſtabliſhed upon
etter promiſes*, viz. *the promiſe of an eternal inheritance*,
s the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, chap. ix. 15. All the ex-
preſs promiſes of the law were only of temporal good
things, but the promiſes of the goſpel are of eternal
ife and happineſs: *This is the promiſe which he hath
romiſed us, even eternal life*, ſays St John, 1 John ii. 25.

Now, the firm perſuaſion of another life does n
only anſwer that great difficulty and objection agai
the providence of God, from the ſeeming injuſtice a
inequality of his dealings with good and bad men
this world, becauſe the eternal rewards and puniſ
ments of another world will ſet all things ſtraight, a
make abundant amends to good men, for all their ſu
ferings and afflictions here; and will render the pa
proſperity of bad men one of the greateſt aggravatio
of their miſery: as it is ſaid of Babylon, Rev. xviii.
*How much ſhe hath glorified herſelf and lived deliciouſl
ſo much torment and ſorrow give her.* In like mann
God will deal with wicked men in another world; the
torments ſhall riſe in proportion to the pleaſure and pr
ſperity they have enjoyed and abuſed in this worl
This remarkable change of condition which ſhall befa
good and bad men, in another world, is ſet forth to u
in a very lively and affecting manner in the parable o
the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where Abra
ham is repreſented ſpeaking thus to the rich man, *Son
remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy goo
things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: but now he
comforted, and thou art tormented. He is comforted* in pro
portion to his ſufferings in this world; *and thou art tor
mented* in proportion to the ſenſual pleaſures and luxurie
of thy former life. Men, under great want and ſufferings
are apt to think their lot in this world very hard; and ye
upon the whole matter, and taking all things into conſi
deration, who would not much rather chuſe to be Laza
rus with his hard fortune in this world, and everlaſting
conſolation in the other, than the rich man drowned i
pleaſure in this world, and tormented in flames in th
other? I ſay, the firm belief of another life does no
only anſwer this objection againſt the divine providence
but does likewiſe miniſter abundant comfort and mat
ter of joy to good men, under all their fears and trouble
in this world. Nay, this conſideration alone of a bleſ
ſed immortality in another world, of which only
the Chriſtian religion hath given us full and un
doubted aſſurance, is of that weight and moment, as to
contribute more to the ſupport of our ſpirits under the
evils

evs and calamities of this life, than all the considera-tions of philosophy put together. They are many of them pleasant and pretty, and fit enough to entertain and divert a man's mind under a slight trouble; but they are too speculative and refined for common capacities, too thin and weak to bear any great stress, and to support and relieve a man's mind under a sore and heavy affliction: but this is a consideration which hath strength and substance in it, that all things will end in our unspeakable happiness, and that this happiness shall have no end. This the Apostle St Paul speaks of as a proper consideration of comfort, of which we are assured by the Christian religion, that all the evils of this life shall in the last issue and result of things co-operate to our happiness: Rom. viii. 28. *We know*, says he, *that all things work together for good to them that love God.* And 2 Cor. iv. 16. 17. 18. *For which cause we faint not*, &c. The Apostle gives us an account, how they were afflicted and persecuted, and what it was that supported them under all their sufferings, ver. 8. 9. 10. 11. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of our Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake.* And then he tells us what it was that kept up the spirits of Christians under these sharp sufferings, viz. the assurance which the Christian religion gives us of a resurrection to a better and happier life, ver. 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus.* And then it follows, ver. 16. *For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day;* that is, though our bodies be wasted and weakened, yet every day we grow stronger in the resolution of our minds, because *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.* And then, at the beginning of the next

chapter, he ſtill urgeth the ſame conſideration of co fort, that ſo ſoon as we paſs out of the troubles this life, we ſhall enter upon the happineſs of the oth *For we know*, that is, we Chriſtians are aſſured, *that our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we h a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eter in the heavens.* Here you ſee is the great ground of th confidence and comfort in the worſt condition, and u der the moſt grievous perſecutions which they were co tinually expoſed to.

And therefore our Saviour and his apoſtles make ſcruple to pronounce thoſe perſons bleſſed, who, in ſpect of their ſufferings, ſeemed to be of all men in t world the moſt miſerable; and they pronounce th happy, upon this very account of their ſufferin Matth. v. 10. 11. 12. *Bleſſed are they*, ſays our Sa our, *which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſſed are ye when ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all man of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake. Rejoice, and be ceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.* Gr ſufferings for God, in this world, do intitle us, by vi of this gracious promiſe of our Lord, to a glorious ward in the other. So likewiſe St James exhorts Ch ſtians to rejoice in their ſufferings, James i. 2. *My b thren, account it all joy when ye fall into divers tria* And, chap. v. 11. *Behold*, ſays he, *we count them h py which endure.* And St Peter, to the ſame purp 1 Pet. iv. 14. *If ye be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſa happy are ye.* So ſolid a comfort to men under all t troubles and afflictions of this world, is that firm aſſ rance which the Chriſtian religion gives us of a futu happineſs, as to bring even the greateſt miſeries, whi in this life we are liable to, in ſome ſenſe under the n tion of bleſſedneſs.

And this was not only fine talk, like the glori brags of the Stoics; but the primitive Chriſtians, infinite examples, gave the real proof and evidence it, in their conſtant and chearful behaviour under t moſt cruel and intolerable torments. *Non magna quimur, ſed vivimus*, ſays Tertullian, in the name of t Chriſtians: "We do not talk great things, but

"then

them; and demonstrate the real effect of our words and profession in our lives and actions." Never did ie arguments fetched from another world, and the assurance of a blessed immortality, display their force id virtue more, than in the joyful sufferings of the first hristians, and their generous contempt of all that was ear to them in this world, *in hope of that eternal life, hich God, that cannot lie, hath promised;* and which ie Son of God had ensured to them, by his resurrection rom the dead.

II. The Christian religion promiseth to every sincere hristian, the inward assistance, and support, and comort of God's Holy Spirit, to bear up the weakness of uman nature under its heaviest pressures of fear or sufering. And this is peculiar to the Christian religion: or though the providence of God did take particular are of good men in all ages, and he did always in some good measure assist them to do their duty, and afford comfort and support to them under great trials and ufferings; yet God never made so express and general promise of this to all good men, as he hath done by the Christian religion. Never was so constant a presence and influence of the divine Spirit vouchsafed and assured to men under any dispensation, as that of the gospel, wherein the Spirit of God is promised to all that sincerely embrace the Christian religion, to reside and dwell in them, not only to all the purposes of sanctification and holiness, but of support and comfort under all troubles and suffering; for which reason the gospel is called *the ministration of the Spirit;* and is upon this account said to be more glorious than any other revelation which God had ever made to mankind. And therefore this is said to be essential to every Christian, to have the Spirit of God dwell in him. Rom. viii. 9. 10. speaking of all true Christians, *Ye are,* saith St Paul, *not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* So that every sincere Christian *is made partaker of the promise of the Spirit through faith;* that is, by his belief of the Christian religion, he is under the immediate conduct and influence of God's Holy Spirit, and hath this blessed guide and Comforter

forter always preſent with him, nay, continually dwelling and reſiding in him, if we do not grieve and quench, and drive him away from us by our ill treatment of him and reſiſtance of his bleſſed motions.

And this promiſe of the Spirit our Saviour had a very particular reſpect to, when he preſcribes faith in himſelf as a ſpecial remedy againſt that trouble which poſſeſſed their minds, upon the apprehenſion of his departure from them; and therefore he tells them ſo often, that when he was gone from them, he would ſend them another Comforter or Advocate, who ſhould undertake their cauſe, and would ſtand by them in their greateſt troubles and temptations. He tells them, that he himſelf would be an Advocate for them in heaven: but becauſe that was at a great diſtance, and might not be ſo ſenſible a comfort to them, he promiſeth to ſend them another Advocate, that ſhould be preſent with them here on earth, and upon all occaſions undertake their patronage and defence. So that all things conſidered, he aſſures them there was ſo little reaſon to be troubled at his departure from them, that they had cauſe rather to be glad of it, becauſe it would turn to their great advantage; and inſtead of the benefit of his outward teaching and preſence, they ſhould have the inward preſence and teaching of his Spirit, and the continual aids and ſupports of his grace. *I go my way*, ſays he, John xvi. 5. 6. 7. *I go my way to him that ſent me, and none of you aſketh me, Whither goeſt thou? but becauſe I have ſaid theſe things unto you, ſorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.* And ſo the evangeliſt tells us before, chap. vii. 29. that *the Spirit was not to be given, till Jeſus was firſt glorified. This*, ſays he, *ſpake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him ſhould receive: for the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified*; plainly declaring, that, according to the wiſe diſpenſation of God, it was ſo ordered, that the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt for the propagating of the goſpel, by thoſe miraculous powers which were to be conferred upon the firſt publiſhers

fhers of it, and for the ſupporting and comforting of Chriſtians under the ſharp trials and ſufferings to which they were to be expoſed, was the fruit of *Chriſt's aſcenſion into heaven*, and *his ſitting at the right hand of the Majeſty on high*, and the firſt boon which he ſhould obtain of his Father, by the virtue and power of his interceſſion. *I will pray the Father*, ſays he, ver. 16. of this chapter, *and he ſhall ſend you another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, and he ſhall abide with you for ever. He ſhall ſend you another Comforter;* ſo our tranſlation renders the word παρακλητος, but it moſt properly ſignifies *an advocate or patron*, that undertakes our defence, and pleads our cauſe for us. And this the Holy Ghoſt, in a moſt eminent and remarkable manner, was to the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, when they were called to anſwer for themſelves before kings and governors. They were generally men of low condition and mean breeding, eaſily daſhed out of countenance before great men; and therefore our Saviour promiſed that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be their Advocate, and ſhould prompt and aſſiſt them in the pleading of their cauſe. Matth. x. 18. 19. 20. *Ye ſhall be brought before governors and kings for my ſake. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak: for it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father, which ſpeaketh in you.* Or, as it is in St Luke, chap. xii. ver. 12. *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall teach you in the ſame hour what ye ought to ſay.* And yet more fully, chap. xxi. ver. 12. 14. 15.; where, ſpeaking again of *their being brought before kings and rulers for his name's ſake*, he gives them this charge: *Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye ſhall anſwer; for I will give you a mouth and wiſdom, which all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay, nor reſiſt.*

And this promiſe we find remarkably made good to St Stephen, Acts vi. 10. of whom it is there ſaid, that *his enemies were not able to reſiſt the wiſdom and the ſpirit by which he ſpake.* And to St Paul likewiſe, when he was firſt called to anſwer for himſelf at Rome, as he himſelf tells Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 16. 17. *At my firſt anſwer*

answer no man stood with me; but all men forsook n notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthe me.

And though this was extraordinary, yet all Christia have, by virtue of this promise, the ordinary assistan and comfort of God's Holy Spirit in all their troubles a afflictions. By this Spirit we may in all our distre with confidence make our addresses to God, *having a cess by one Spirit to the Father,* as St Paul speaks, Eph. 18. By the same Spirit we are assisted in our praye and directed many times what to ask of God, suitable the condition which his providence designs to bring into; which seems to be the Apostle's meaning, Ro viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmitie for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but t Spirit itself maketh intercession for us;* that is, sugge to us such requests as are fit for us to put up to Go By the same Spirit is secretly infused into our soul *peace and joy in believing, great consolation and good ho through grace.* Hence are those expressions in scripture, *the consolation of the Spirit,* and of *joy in the Holy Gho* the best cordial in the world in all cases of trouble.

And in extraordinary cases, good men, by virtue this promise of the Spirit, may expect to be borne u and comforted in a very extraordinary and supernatura manner, under the greatest tribulations and suffering *for righteousness sake.* This was very signal and re markable in the primitive Christians, who were expose to the most fierce and cruel persecutions; and may stil be expected in like cases of extraordinary suffering fo the testimony of God's truth. *If ye be reproached,* saith St Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 14. *for the name of Christ, happy ar ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you* The Spirit of God is there promised, to strengthen an support all that suffer for the name of Christ, in a very conspicuous and glorious manner; according to tha prayer of St Paul, Col. i. 11. that Christians might be *strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness.* For when God exerciseth good men with trials more than human, and sufferings which are beyond the ordinary rate of human strength and patience to bear, he hath engaged himself

himself to assist and endow them with more than human courage and resolution. So St Paul tells the Corinthians, who had not yet felt the utmost rage of persecution, 1 Cor. x. 13. *No temptation, or trial, hath yet befallen you, but what is common to men;* nothing but what is frequently incident to human nature, annd what, by an ordinary assistance of God's grace, men may grapple with; but in case God calls men to extraordinary sufferings, *He is faithful that hath promised, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why should we be daunted at the weight of an affliction, if we be well assured that our strength shall be increased in proportion to our burden?

And where-ever this promise is not made good, there is some defect on our part; either men are not sincere in the profession of the truth, and then no wonder if they fall for fear of suffering; or they have been too confident of themselves, and have not, with that earnestness and importunity they ought, prayed to God for his grace and assistance, and thereupon God hath justly left them to try their strength against a violent and powerful temptation: as he did Peter, who, for all his confidence, did, upon no very great temptation, deny his Saviour; but even in this case, where there is truth and sincerity at the bottom, God gives to such persons, as he did to Peter, the opportunity of recovering themselves by repentance.

There are three particulars more remain, but I shall proceed no farther at this time.

SER-

SERMON CCXVII.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of li

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, beli alſo in me.

The third ſermon on this text.

FRom theſe words I propoſed to ſhew, what for and virtue there is in the remedy propoſ by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our tro bles; and I told you that our Saviour here preſcrib a double remedy.

Firſt, Faith in God, the great Creator and Govern of the world.

Secondly, Faith in himſelf, the Son of God and S viour of men. I have ſpoken to the firſt, and hav likwiſe entered upon the

Second; And here I propounded to ſhew, what farth conſiderations of comfort and ſupport, faith in Chriſt and the firm belief of the Chriſtian religion, do affor to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of thei greateſt fears and troubles. And I mentioned five.

I. Faith in Chriſt gives us full aſſurance of immorta lity, and the rewards of another world.

II. It promiſeth to every ſincere Chriſtian, the in ward aſſiſtance and ſupport of God's Holy Spirit. Thu far I have gone. I now proceed.

III. It aſſures us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayer with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, o for the aids and ſupports of his grace under it.

Now, concerning the great efficacy of our prayer with God, there are ſeveral very particular and remark able promiſes and declarations in the New Teſta ment.

nnt, Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: sk, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall opened unto y*. Matth. xxi. 22. *And all things whatsoever ye shall a in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* John xv. 7. *ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall a what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* But then directs us to put up our petitions to God *in his name*, athe way to make them prevalent. John xiv. 13. 1. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I e, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ll ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And chap. xi. 23. 24. he repeats this promise again for their sup-rt and comfort under the tribulations which they ould endure. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. rily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the ther in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you ve asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, t your joy may be full.* And again, ver. 26. 27. *At t day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, t I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself eth you.* He assures them of God's merciful incli-tion towards them; and if it would add any ing to their comfortable assurance of having their ayers heard, he could have told them, *that he would ay the Father for them.* St James particularly com-rts the Christians under their trials upon this consider-tion, that God is ready to give wisdom and strength to emean ourselves as we ought under sufferings, if we artily beg it of him, James i. 2. 3. 4. 5. *My bre-ren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, owing this, that the trying of your faith worketh pati-ce: but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* And since this quires great wisdom, to bear great afflictions with pa-ence, therefore he adds, that God is always ready to rant this wisdom and grace to those that heartily beg of him. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of od that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; nd it shall be given him.* 1 John iii. 22. *And whatso-er we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his com-andments, and do those things which are pleasing in his ght.* And chap. v. 14. 15. *And this is the confidence*

that we have in him, that is, we Christians: for he h
said before, *These things have I written unto you, t
believe on the name of the Son of God*; and then it f
lows, *And this is the confidence that we have in him, t
if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth
And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we a
we know that we have the petitions that we desired
him*; that is, though we have not presently the thi
we prayed for, yet we are as sure of it as if we had
The earnest prayer of every sincere Christian is v
powerful and available with God. So St James assu
us, chap. v. 16. *The effectual fervent prayer of a rig
teous man availeth much*; much more the united pra
ers of the faithful. So our Saviour declares, Matt
xviii 19. *Again, I say unto you, that if two of you sh
agree on earth, as touching the thing that they shall a
it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heave*

All these promises and declarations do certainly si
nify a more special efficacy and prevalency of the pra
ers of Christians. And though there was a miraculo
power of prayer in the primitive times, which is no
ceased, and of which St James plainly speaks, cha
v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for t
elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anoin
ing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the pray
of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise h
up:* Yet it is certain that these promises extend farthe
to the efficacy of the prayers of the faithful in such cas
And so our Saviour extends this promise, Matth. xx
22. for after he had said in the verse before, *Ver
I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye sha
not only do this which is done to the fig-tree; but al
if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, a
be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.* After th
he immediately subjoins, *And all things whatsoever ye a
in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;* hereby declarin
that the efficacy of the prayers of Christians was no
limited only to those miraculous effects, which we
but to continue for a time, but that this promise was t
be extended to the prayers of the faithful in all case
and all times.

An

And indeed all the grounds and reasons of the efficacy and prevalency of our prayers, which are mentioned in the New Testament, do equally concern Christians in all times; as that we pray to God in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, upon which our Saviour very frequently, when he makes this promise, lays great stress, and seems to render it as the reason of the special efficacy of our prayers. John xiv. 13. 14. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And chap. xvi. 23. 24. *Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive.*

Another reason of the acceptance and prevalency of our prayers, is, that the Spirit of God which dwells in all true Christians does help our weakness, and secretly directs us to ask of God those things which are according to his will, and does, as it were, intercede for us. Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we shall pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* And ver. 17. *And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.* And no wonder if those petitions are very prevalent, which we are assisted and directed to put up to God, according to his will.

And this certainly is a great comfort under any trouble, that we can have free access to God by prayer, in confidence that he will grant us those requests which we put up to him according to his will. And this the Apostle to the Hebrews mentions more than once, as an argument to them to continue stedfast in the profession of their religion, notwithstanding the persecution that attended it, because we may, at all times, address ourselves to God in confidence of his gracious help and assistance, Heb. iv. 16. After he had exhorted them *to hold fast their profession*, as an encouragement thereto, he adds the free access we may have to God for his help and support: *Let us therefore*, says he, *come boldly*

or with great freedom and confidence, *to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and succour.* And to the same purpose, chap. x. 19. 20. *Having therefore, brethren, freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;* that is, having access to God in prayer by Jesus Christ; *let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith:* that is, in perfect confidence that our prayers will be graciously heard and answered: upon which he adds, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised:* if we continue steadfast to God, and the profession of his truth, he will make good all that he hath promised, both of present support under our sufferings, and of the glorious reward of them in another life: he will hear our prayers, and grant us the aids and supplies of his grace as we stand in need of them.

IV. The Christian religion propounds to us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was of patience and constancy of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, or the sense of our present suffering, and of a contented and chearful submission to the will of God in the saddest condition to which human nature is incident; and that is the pattern of our blessed Saviour, who, for this reason among others, was so great a sufferer in so many kinds, that he might go before us in the rough and difficult way, and *leave us an example that we should follow his steps*, that we might learn from him how to calm and quiet our spirits, to appease and hush the tumults of our passions, under the severest dispensations of God's providence towards us, and to bend our wills to a patient submission to the will of our heavenly Father, under the sorest afflictions and sharpest sufferings. For though our blessed Saviour prayed so earnestly to his Father, that *that* bitter cup *might pass from him*, yet how quietly and chearfully did he resign and yield up himself to the will of God, saying, *Yet not my will, but thine be done?* Human nature shrunk and gave back at the sight of his dreadful sufferings: but his reason overruled the inclinations of nature, and kept him to a steady resolution of submitting to the will of God. And therefore when Peter attempted his rescue, he commanded him

h to desist, saying, *Put thy sword into the sheath: the c which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* Jn xviii. 11. And though he had as quick a sense of fering as any man, yet with what *patience did he pos- s his soul!* with what meekness and humility of spirit d he bear and yield to it! *He was led as a lamb t to slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, she opened not his mouth. When he was reviled, he viled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; b committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* nd thus *it became the Captain of our salvation*, that he ght be a perfect pattern to us of patience and sub- nission to the will of God, of a meek and undisturb- e mind, under the greatest bodily pains, and the ex- me anguish of his soul, *to be made perfect by sufferings.*

So that under the greatest present evils, or the most rful apprehension of future evil and suffering, we hould fix our eye stedfastly upon this great and glorious mple of patience, and constancy, and meekness; of alue sense, and yet of a most decent behaviour under t heaviest load of affliction, that was ever laid upon y of the sons of men; looking, as the Apostle exhorts, Heb. xii. 2. 3. *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, dured the cross, and despised the shame; and considering n, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds.*

And surely, if we would but let our minds dwell a hile upon this consideration of the sufferings of the Son God, and his great meekness, and patience, and bmission to the will of God under them, it would ghtily conduce to the mitigating of our trouble, and nging us to *possess our souls in patience*, in the saddest ndition that can befal us.

And what consideration more proper for us than this, hen we are going to receive the blessed sacrament, herein the sufferings of the Son of God are represented us, in the symbols of his body broken, and his blood ed for the remission of our sins? and there are many nsiderations which this sight is apt to suggest to us, hich are so many powerful arguments to quiet and

comfort our minds under the greateſt troubles and ſu
ferings which we are liable to; ſuch as theſe.

1. The grievous ſufferings, which the Son of G
was expoſed to, do clearly ſhew us that the good thir
of this life are not ſo valuable, nor the evils and ſuffe
ings of it ſo conſiderable, as we are apt to fancy and in
gine; when the beſt man that ever lived was ſo deſ
tute even of the common comforts and convenienc
of human life, and had ſo large a ſhare of the calan
ties and ſufferings of it. If we could but rectify c
opinion of things, it would go a great way in maki
any of the evils and afflictions of this life tolerable.
God ſee good to reduce us to poverty and want, let
think of him, who *being Lord of all, had not where*
lay his head; who *being rich, for our ſakes became po*
that we through his poverty might be made rich. To
deſtitute of worldly accommodations cannot ſeem
diſmal and deſpicable a ſight, when we conſider wh
lot it was to live in a low and indigent condition; t
very conſideration whereof doth not only make pover
tolerable, but even glorious.

So likewiſe, when we are *perſecuted for righteouſn*
ſake, and exerciſed with ſufferings and reproache
when we are ready to be diſcouraged in well-doing
the oppoſition we meet withal from the ingratitude
men, and the malicious interpretation of our good a
ons, perverting the beſt things, done with the beſt mi
and to the beſt end, to ſome ill purpoſe and deſign:
us *look to Jeſus*, and *conſider him who endured ſuch contr*
diction of ſinners againſt himſelf, and this will help to
bate the hideous apprehenſion of theſe things.

2. The ſufferings of the Son of God are a demonſtrati
to us, that the love and favour of God, wherein t
chief happineſs of man conſiſts, are not to be eſtimat
and meaſured by outward proſperity in this worl
much leſs can it be concluded from temporal afflictio
and ſufferings, that God hath no favour and kindn
for thoſe whom he thinks fit to exerciſe with them. F
we ſee plainly, by this inſtance of the grievous ſuffer
of his Son, that God may moſt deeply wound and
flict thoſe whom he moſt dearly loves; and if we c
be ſecure of the favour of God, and his loving-kin

ne

ess, why should *our hearts be troubled* and dismayed at the apprehension of any evil that can befal us?

God may love his children, and yet chasten them very severely: nay, that he does so, is rather an argument that they are his children, and that he loves them, and is concerned for them. So I am sure the Apostle teacheth us to argue, Heb. xii. 6. 7. 8. *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.* The heaviest and most grievous load of sufferings that ever was laid on any man, God permitted to be laid *on his only begotten Son, the dearly beloved of his soul, in whom he was well pleased.* The greater our afflictions are, and the more we suffer for *righteousness sake*, so much the liker are we to the Son of God, and so much the more likely to be the sons and children of God. It is true, as the Apostle tells us, that *no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous:* but surely it is a great mitigation of it, to consider what a glorious example and argument of patience our religion proposeth to us, for our encouragement under sufferings: that the best man that ever was, lived in the most afflicted condition; and the greatest sufferer that ever was, or can be, was *the dearly beloved Son of God.*

3. In the victorious sufferings of the Son of God, we see the world conquered to our hand, all the terrors and temptations of it disarmed, and all its force baffled and broken. This consideration our Saviour makes use of to support the faint spirits of his disciples, under the melancholy apprehensions which they had of sufferings, John xvi. 33. *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* The great work is done to our hands; affliction and death are vanquished and overcome by him. That conquest which the *Captain of our salvation* hath already made of all *the powers of darkness*, renders our victory over them cheap and easy.

4. The temptations and sufferings of our Lord were greater than ours are or can be; for he bore the heavy and

and insupportable load of all the sins of all mankind and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. *The Lord hath laid on him*, saith the Prophet, Is. liii. 6. *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; he was oppressed and afflicted.* And well might he be oppressed with affliction, who had such an intolerable burden as the sins of all mankind to press him down. That passage is commonly applied to him, and well might he cry out in that manner, *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.* Such were the sufferings of our Lord so great and so grievous, as none of us are in any degree able to undergo. That weight under which he crouched, would crush us; that which he was hardly able to sustain, would certainly sink us; and do we complain and *faint in our minds*, when but a very little part of the punishment due to us only for our own sins is inflicted upon us? The consideration of the heavy and *unknown sufferings of the Son of God* should make all our afflictions not only tolerable, but light.

5. And yet we have in effect the same support that he had. We are apt to be very much disheartened and discouraged at the apprehension of sufferings, from the consideration of our own weakness and frailty; *but the Spirit of Christ dwells in us*, and the same *glorious power that raised up Jesus from the dead, works mightily on them that believe.* St Paul useth very high expressions in this matter, Eph. i. 19. 20. *That ye may know*, says he, speaking in general of all Christians, *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand.* So that every sincere Christian is endowed with a kind of omnipotency, being able, as St Paul says of himself, *to do all things through Christ strengthening him.* We are of ourselves very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful; but there is a principle residing in every true Christian, that is able to bear us up against the world and the power of all its temptations. *Whatsoever is born of God*, says St John, *overcometh the world: for greater*

eater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. he Holy Spirit of God which dwells in all true Chri- ians is a more powerful principle of reſolution, and ›urage, and patience, under the ſharpeſt trials and ſuf- ings, than that evil ſpirit which rules in the world to ſtir up and ſet on the malice and rage of the world ainſt us. *Ye are of God, and have overcome the world; cauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the orld.*

6. Let us conſider farther, for whom and for what ur bleſſed Lord ſuffered. Not for himſelf; but for ur ſake: not for any fault of his own; for *he had no n;* but for our ſins. He was perfectly innocent: but e are great and grievous offenders. We ſuffer upon ur own account: but he only for our ſakes, and for ur ſalvation. So that the example of our Lord's fferings hath an irreſiſtible force and virtue in it, to rgue us into patience and ſubmiſſion. Did he bear the oad of our ſins ſo willingly? did he *who had no ſin* ſuf- er ſo patiently, to free us from eternal ſufferings? and hall we who are guilty think much to bear a ſmall part f that burden, which he ſo chearfully underwent for s, and which falls ſo much ſhort of the due puniſhment of our fault? The penitent thief upon the croſs urged the equity and force of this argument to patience, to his fellow-criminal, that they who had been guilty of ſuch great crimes, and were juſtly condemned for them, ought to be patient under their ſufferings. *We indeed,* ſays he, *are juſtly condemned; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiſs.*

7. and laſtly, If we conſider the tranſcendent ex- cellency and dignity of the perſon who underwent ſo great ſufferings with ſo much meekneſs and patience, and with ſo even and undiſturbed a mind, this will calm and allay our paſſions, and mitigate the troubles which befal us pitiful and inconſiderable creatures, in compari- ſon of this *Prince of glory, and heir of everlaſting bliſs.* When we conſider the meekneſs of this excellent per- ſon, *the eternal Son of God,* and with what ſubmiſſion and ſerenity of mind he demeaned himſelf under ſo great and continual provocations from his own crea- tures and beneficiaries, thoſe whom he had made, and whom

whom he came to ſave; ſhall we think much to be the indignities and affronts of our fellow-creature When we behold how contented this great perſon w in the meaneſt condition, how he welcomed all even and was ſo perfectly reſigned to the will of his heaven Father, that whatever pleaſed God, pleaſed him; ſh we murmur at any condition which the providence of G allots to us, and repine at any event whatſoever?

Shall we reſent injuries, and affronts, and calamiti ſo hainouſly, as to be out of all temper and patience, wh we conſider with what meekneſs of temper, and ho little emotion of mind the Son of God bore all theſ how *he gave his back to the ſmiters, and his cheeks to the that plucked off the hair, and with-held not his face fro ſhame and ſpitting*; how *he was led as a lamb to t ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before the ſhearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not gain; when he ſuffered, he threatened not?*

To conclude, can we entertain thoughts of reven towards the inſtruments of our ſufferings, when w have ſuch a pattern of forgiving before us, who pour out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them th ſhed it, and ſpent his laſt breath in a moſt fervent ar charitable prayer for his betrayers and murderers?

Thus we ſhould propoſe to ourſelves the pattern o our Lord's ſpirit and demeanour under ſufferings, i whom meekneſs, and ſubmiſſion, and *patience had the perfect work; that the ſame mind may be in us, that w in Chriſt Jeſus*, and that as we have him for *an exampl we may follow his ſteps*.

The laſt conſideration of comfort and ſupport und trouble, which the Chriſtian religion gives us, remai yet to be ſpoken to, namely, that we are aſſured of moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual pa tron, and advocate, and interceſſor with God for us.

But this, together with the application of this whol diſcourſe, I ſhall refer to the next opportunity.

SER

SERMON CCXVIII.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.

The fourth ſermon on this text.

I Come now to the fifth and laſt ground of comfort, which the Chriſtian religion affords to good men, for their ſupport under trouble, namely, that it aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual Patron, and Advocate, and Interceſſor with God in heaven for us, namely, our bleſſed Saviour, *who for the ſuffering of death was crowned with glory and honour, advanced at the right hand of God, where he ſits in great majeſty and glory, having all power in heaven and earth committed to him, and where he lives continually to make interceſſion for us.*

And this is another conſideration mentioned by our Saviour for the comfort of his diſciples, who were ſo ſorrowful at the thoughts of his departure from them, that though he ſhould leave the world, yet he ſhould be highly advanced in heaven, where he would certainly employ all his favour, and power, and intereſt, for their benefit and advantage, and be an everlaſting Patron and Advocate for thoſe whoſe ſalvation he had purchaſed with ſo much ſweat and blood, preſenting our requeſts and prayers to God, in virtue of his moſt meritorious ſacrifice and ſufferings continually preſented to his Father, perpetually ſoliciting our cauſe, and procuring for us all thoſe bleſſings by his interceſſion in heaven, which he had purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth. *For which reaſon,* ſaith the Apoſtle, Heb. vii.

vii. 25. *he is able to save to the uttermost all those t come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make in cession for us;* that is, he is able to perfect the work our salvation, which he began here upon earth; a to procure for all those who address their prayers God in his name, whatever is needful and conveni for us, because he is always at the right hand of G to second our prayers by his powerful interces for us.

And this is a ground of comfort, though not grea and more substantial in itself than the other; yet m accommodated to our apprehensions, who are natura apt to dread the majesty of God, and to seek out some in favour with him, to be mediators and interc sors with God for us, and to present our prayers a requests to him. And this was the original of the a dresses of the Heathens to the angels and souls departe as a kind of intermediate and inferior deities, to prese their prayers, and intercede with the great God in th behalf. And as, in compliance with the general appr hension of mankind concerning the appeasing of t Deity by all sorts of sacrifices, God was pleased to pr vide one sacrifice, which by being once offered should o *tain eternal redemption for us, and perfect for ever the that are sanctified*, and by this means to put an e both to the carnal sacrifices of the law, and the barb rous inhuman sacrifices of the Pagan worship; so, in lik condescension to the general inclinations of mankir to address themselves to God by several mediators ar intercessors, God hath appointed *one only Mediator b tween God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who ga himself a ransom for all*, thereby to put an end to th infinite superstition, which had obtained in the worl for so many ages, of addressing their prayers to God b the mediation of good angels, and departed souls their heroes and great men, who were, as I may so ca them, the Pagan saints.

So that as under the gospel God hath appointed bu one sacrifice for sin, that should be of eternal efficacy so but one Mediator in heaven for sinners, to offer u our prayers to God, and to intercede continually for us in the power and virtue of that *one sacrifice once offer*

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f the redemption of mankind. And therefore it is eve-
r what as contrary to the genius and design of the
Christian religion, to apply ourselves to other intercess-
ors with God in heaven for us, whether saints or angels,
even the blessed virgin herself, as it would be to con-
tue still the Jewish sacrifices, not to say the Heathen.
Ir it is not clearer that there is but one proper sacrifice
ıder the gospel, *viz.* that of Christ upon the cross,
ın that there is but one Mediator and Intercessor with
od in heaven for us. Nay, St Paul speaks as if the
Christian religion did no more admit of more mediators
ın one, than of more Gods than one, 1 Tim. ii. 5.
here is one God, and one Mediator between God and
n, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for
l. Nor is the force of this plain text to be avoided,
l saying that the Apostle here speaks of *a mediator of*
demption, as appears by the following words, *who gave*
mself a ransom for all. For it is plain likewise, that he
eaks also of *a mediator of intercession,* and affirms him
be but one, as is evident from what goes before.
he Apostle directs *prayers and supplications to be made*
r all men, and then, at the 5th verse, to whom Chri-
ians should address these prayers, and by whose me-
iation, *viz.* to God, in the name and mediation of Je-
s Christ. *For,* says he, *there is one God, and one Me-*
ator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. So
at the Apostle's discourse does as plainly infer, that
ere is but *one mediator of intercession,* as that there is
ut *one mediator of redemption.*

And indeed whosoever considers that quite throughout
ıe New Testament our Saviour and his apostles do con-
antly direct Christians to make their prayers to God in the
ame and mediation of Jesus Christ, and no where give so
uch as the least intimation of applying ourselves to any
ther intercessors with God in heaven for us, may justly
onder how this superstition of praying to angels and
ints departed, which hath no manner of countenance,
nd is by necessary consequence so clearly forbidden,
hould ever prevail among Christians; especially since
t is a plain diminution of the virtue and efficacy of
ur Saviour's intercession; or if it add nothing to it, is
erfectly vain and endless, and to no purpose. For

what need of any other interceſſors with God in hea for us, if that be true which the Apoſtle to the Hebr moſt expreſsly affirms, that *Chriſt is able to ſave th to the uttermoſt that come to God by him, ſeeing he e liveth to make interceſſion for them?*

The prevalency and efficacy whereof may juſtly i niſter to us, in all our diſtreſſes and troubles, ſome pe liar ground of comfort above what ſprings from the b contemplation of the divine nature; that we have powerful a friend to intercede with God for us, one dearly beloved of him, and ſo highly in his favour; c that is advanced *far above all principalities and powe and every name that is named, not only in this world, in that which is to come;* and conſequently able to more for us, than all the bleſſed ſaints and angels heaven, and more than all the powers of darkneſs c do againſt us.

And this is matter of great comfort to us upon th three conſiderations.

1. That our Advocate is ſo nearly related to us, h ving condeſcended, by aſſuming our nature, to be all to us, to become *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fle* ſo that we may addreſs ourſelves to him with great fr dom and confidence, and as the Apoſtle expreſſeth Heb. iv. 16. *We may come with boldneſs to this throne grace, for ſeaſonable mercy and help in time of need.* F we may moſt aſſuredly believe, that he who ſtooped be made man, and to become one of us, will, upon occaſions, moſt heartily be concerned for us, and rea to help us.

2. Conſidering that he hath already given the great demonſtration of his kindneſs and compaſſion to u we may be ſure that he who hath done and ſuffered ſu things for our ſakes, hath a very tender love and affe tion for us; he who was contented to die for us, w do for us any thing elſe that may do us good.

3. And that we might have no doubt of his forwar neſs and inclination to pity and relieve us, he ſuffer the moſt grievous things himſelf that any man cou ſuffer, that from the experience and remembrance of h own ſufferings, he might learn to compaſſionate And this the Apoſtle particularly inſiſts upon, as ve

ry comfortable consideration to us in all our trials and ferings: Heb. iv. 15. 16. *For we have not an high ieſt, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our in- mities, but was in all points tempted like as we are; yet ithout ſin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help time of need.* And chap. ii. 17. 18. *Wherefore in all ings it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, at he might be a merciful and faithful high prieſt: for that he himſelf ſuffered being tempted, he is able to ccour them that are tempted.* So that we may reſt aſ- red of his pity and ſupport in all our affictions and ials, who knows both the infirmity of our nature, and ith himſelf had experience of greater ſufferings than ny of us either ſhall or can be exerciſed withal.

And as for the general concernment of his truth and eligion, and church upon earth, that which all good nen are with ſo much reaſon ſolicitous about, this is lis proper care, and the great buſineſs that he is intent pon, now that he is in heaven, to protect and defend is truth and religion, and the church which profeſſeth t, ſo that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* This is *his kingdom*, for the effectual adminiſtration whereof *all power in heaven and earth is committed to him.* And as he intercedeth with his Father for every particular Chriſtian, ſo much more for *his church, which is his body;* to preſerve her from all dangers that threat- en her ruin, and to guard her againſt the power and malice of all her enemies. For to this end was he ad- vanced to the right hand of God, that he might conti- nue there, *till he had made his enemies his footſtool.* And this kingdom of his ſhall continue in his hands, *till he have put down all rule, and all authority, and power* that ſets itſelf againſt him: *for he muſt reign, till he have put all things under his feet.*

So that though truth may be obſcured and clouded for a time, and the profeſſors of it grievouſly haraſſed and oppreſſed, yet it ſhall not finally be borne down, but ſhall at length prevail againſt all oppoſition; be- cauſe he who hath undertaken the protection of it is mighty, the *King of kings, and Lord of lords,* the chief favourite of heaven, who is continually *at the right*

hand of God, and lives for ever to make intercessi for us.

And thus I have, as briefly as I well could, repr sented to you, what force and virtue there is in the tw remedies here prescribed by our Saviour, for the mitig ting and allaying of our troubles, *viz.* faith in Go the great Creator and Governor of the world; an faith likewise in himself, the Son of God and Savio of men. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe i God, believe also in me.*

And now to apply this discourse to ourselves; th inferences I shall make from it shall be these three.

I. That in all our troubles and adversities, of wha kind soever, we should support and comfort ourselve with the firm belief of the providence of almighty God and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind especially of those that fear him, and put their trust i his mercy.

II. We should put a high value upon the Christia religion; and hold fast the profession of it without wa vering; which affords to us such firm and solid groun of comfort and support under all troubles and afflictio as are no where else to be found; such as neither th light of nature, nor any other revelation that God eve made of himself to mankind, do give us the notice and knowledge of.

III. Since the prayers of Christ are so effectual and prevalent with God, let us, by frequent and fervent prayers, make our requests known to God; and let us, with confidence and full assurance of faith, address ourselves to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and support in the time of need. I shall speak briefly to these, and so conclude this discourse.

I. In all troubles and adversities, of what kind soever, under all afflictions and sufferings that may befal us, of loss or pain, of poverty and sickness, of reproach and persecution for righteousness sake, and under the most fearful apprehensions of danger and distress, to all human appearance inevitably threatening us in our persons and private concernments, or with relation to the public peace or tranquillity, or to that which ought to

be

e infinitely dearer to us than all these, our religion, which is the great concernment of our souls, and of all eternity, when we have no hope any where else, no visible means of help and redress, when we are almost n despair of avoiding the danger, and warding off the blow that is made at us, when ruin and destruction seem just to have overtaken us, and are ready to devour us with open mouth, and to swallow us up quick; in a word, when we are reduced to the greatest extremity and distress that can be imagined, even in this case, if ever it should happen, we should support our minds with a firm belief of the providence of almighty God, and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind, especially of those that fear him, and put their trust n his mercy; and comfort ourselves, as the holy and divine Psalmist does, in all our fears and troubles: *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,* Psal. lvi. 3. And he tells us, that every good man hath ground and reason for this confidence: Psal. cxii. 7. 8. speaking of the righteous and good man, *He shall not,* says he, *be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.* And Psal. xxvii. 1. *The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Psal. lxii. 5. 6. 7. 8. *My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.* And Psalm xlvi. 1. 2. 7. *God is our refuge and strength; and a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.* To which I will add that comfortable promise, Is. xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Thus we may, in all conditions that may befal us, in our greatest fears and troubles, ease our hearts, by reposing ourselves upon God, in confidence of his sup-

port and deliverance, of his care and providence, t prevent and divert the evils we fear; or of his gracio help to bear us up under them; and of his mercy an goodneſs to deliver us from them, when he ſees beſt provided always that we be careful of our duty to him and do what becomes us, and nothing elſe. For ou more particular direction herein,

1. Let us depend upon God, and entirely confide i his goodneſs and care, and truſt his wiſdom and powe for our protection and deliverance; for here is ou great ſecurity. In all our difficulties and troubles, th providence of God is infinitely more to us, than an prudence and conduct of our own. He hath a thou ſand ways to divert and put by the evils which ar levelled againſt us, to turn the counſels of men back ward, and make their devices of none effect. Whe we can do nothing to help and ſave ourſelves, his righ hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance can do it, if he have a favour for us.

2. Let us ſo truſt God, as to neglect no prudent an lawful means for our ſecurity and preſervation fro evil. Let us not, by our raſhneſs and folly, provok trouble and danger, and bring them upon ourſelves Let us, according to our Saviour's counſel, *be wiſe a ſerpents, and innocent as doves.* Let us uſe all that car and prudence which is conſiſtent with innocence an a good conſcience: and when we have done that, le us be no farther ſolicitous, but reſign up ourſelves, an all our concernments, to the good pleaſure of God, an the diſpoſal of his wiſe providence; and leave it to him who made the world, to govern it, becauſe he certainly underſtands it beſt.

3. Let us be ſure to keep within the bounds of ou duty, trying no unlawful ways for our eaſe and preſervatio and reſcue from the evils which we fear and lie under; by looſening the bonds of ſubjection and obedience t authority, or by any other ſiniſter and indirect means. For let us aſſure ourſelves, that God is never mor concerned to appear for us, than when, out of conſcience of our duty to him, we are contented rather to ſuffer, than work our deliverance by undue means. Let us commit ourſelves to him in well-doing, and d nothing,

thing, no, not for the cauſe of religion, which is contrary to the plain rules and precepts of it.

II. We ſhould put a high value upon the Chriſtian religion, and hold faſt the profeſſion of it without wavering, which affords to us ſuch firm and ſolid grounds of comfort and ſupport under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where elſe to be found; ſuch as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that God ever made of himſelf to mankind, do give us any notice and knowledge of.

We ſhould highly value the Chriſtian religion, which hath *brought life and immortality to light*, and hath made a clear a diſcovery to us of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world, for the encouragement of our faith, and ſupport of our patience, under the evils and preſſures of this life; and which promiſeth, and is ready to afford to every ſincere Chriſtian, the precious aids and comforts of God's Holy Spirit, to ſuſtain the weakneſs of human nature under the greateſt tribulations and ſufferings; and does likewiſe aſſure us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers with God; and ſets before us the beſt and moſt admirable pattern that ever was, of a contented and chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of God, in the ſaddeſt condition incident to human nature, and of perfect patience and compoſure of mind under the apprehenſion of approaching evils, and the ſenſe of preſent ſufferings; and laſtly, which aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and interceſſor with God in heaven for us. All theſe are peculiar advantages of the Chriſtian religion, and ought to be ſo many endearments of it to us, and engagements *to hold faſt the profeſſion of it*. This builds our comfort and hope upon a rock, which will abide firm againſt all rains, and winds, and ſtorms. And if we ſuffer ourſelves to be removed from it, we quit the only foundation of all our comfort in this life, and happineſs in the next. So that if we would *hold faſt the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end*, we muſt take heed, as the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12. cautions the Chriſtians in his time; we muſt, I ſay, take heed, *leſt there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*, that is,

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to fall off from the profession of his truth and religio A religion worthy of all men to be received and a hered to; because as it calls us to sufferings, so it affo the greatest comforts and supports under them, as is vident from the chearful and joyful behaviour of t primitive Christians and martyrs, under the greatest e tremities of sufferings and torments, the like instanc whereto of patience and constancy, under so long a repeated persecutions, no other religion that ever w in the world is able to produce.

III. and lastly, Since the prayers of Christians are effectual and prevalent with God, let us, by frequ and fervent *prayer, in every thing make our requests kn to God: and let us, with confidence and full assurance faith, address ourselves to the throne of grace, that may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seaso able help and support in the time of need.* Let us, as o Saviour exhorts his disciples, *watch and pray, lest enter into temptation.* And, as the Apostle likewise e horts, let us *be sober, and vigilant, and watch unto pray* taking all opportunities for it, and spending much ti in this duty; than which none of all the duties injoi ed by the Christian religion, will turn to a better a more comfortable account, if our hearts and lives b but answerable to our prayers.

Let us earnestly beg of God, that his watchful an merciful providence would undertake the care of us that he would fit and prepare us for every conditio which he hath designed to bring us into; and that h would teach us to demean ourselves in it as we ought that he would consider our frailities, and *lay no greate load of affliction upon us, than he will give us grace an strength to bear*; that if he sees it good to exercise an of us with afflictions and sufferings in any kind, h would make us *able to stand in that evil day, and whe we have done all to stand.*

And if instead of vain murmurings, and complaints and terrifying ourselves with fears of what may neve happen, we would, after the example of holy David *betake ourselves to prayer*, and by this means engage th providence of God for our protection from evil, or fo our support under it; we should certainly do much bet

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r for ourſelves, and contribute much more, than we n do any other way, to the prevention of any evil at we can fear, or to the mitigating or ſhortening of as to God's infinite wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall ſeem ſt.

And let us always be mindful of that caution which ir Saviour gives to his diſciples, that they might al- ays be in a due preparation for the coming of our ord to judgment, Luke xxi. 34. 35. 36. *Take heed yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged ith ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this fe, and ſo that day come upon you unawares. For as a ſnare all it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the hole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that all come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man.* This ution and counſel does proportionably hold, as to our eparation for any other evil day of affliction and ſuf- ring in this world; that we ſhould beware of ſenſuali- , and an inordinate love to the things of this world, id care about them; becauſe theſe ſoften and effemi- ate our ſpirits, and render them unfit for the day of dverſity: and that we ſhould *watch and pray;* becauſe heſe are the beſt preparations againſt an evil day, and erhaps may prevent it, at leaſt as to ourſelves, if God hink it fit for us, and *count us worthy to eſcape it.*

To conclude then this whole diſcourſe: In all our ars and troubles, in all afflictions and adverſities that ay happen to us in this world, let us *encourage our- lves in the Lord our God, the Father of mercy, and the od of all conſolation;* and in his bleſſed Son Jeſus Chriſt ur Lord, *the high prieſt of our profeſſion,* and *the au- or and finiſher of our faith; whom God hath exalted far bove all principalities and powers, and every name that is amed, not only in this world, but in that which is to come,* nd hath given him to be head over all things to his church; emembering that we and all our concernments are in he hands of his providence, where we are infinitely ufer than in any counſel and wiſdom of our own. And , after all, it be the will of God to exerciſe any of us vith more than ordinary trials, *to lay affliction upon our oins,* and *to ſuffer men to ride over our heads,* as the Pſalmiſt

Pſalmiſt expreſſeth it, let us, as St Peter exhorts, *commit the keeping of our ſouls to him in well-doing, as to faithful Creator, who is able to keep that which is committed to him, and to preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom*; which let us all humbly and earneſtly beg, for the ſa of Jeſus Chriſt: *To whom with the Father and the Ho Ghoſt, be all honour, and glory, might, majeſty, and dom nion, now and for ever.*

SERMON CCXIX.

Of the nature of faith in general.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

BEfore I come to the words themſelves, in ord to our better underſtanding of them, we wi take into conſideration the deſign of this epiſtl that ſo we may ſee more clearly the relation that the words have to the foregoing diſcourſe. Who the pe man of this epiſtle was, I ſhall not tell you, becauſe do not know, nor is it much material to know it but whoever wrote it, he had this very good deſig in the writing of it, to perſuade the Jews to hold fa the profeſſion of the goſpel, notwithſtanding all the ſu ferings and perſecutions it expoſed them to. And t this purpoſe he ſhews at large, what prerogatives th goſpel hath above the legal adminiſtration. *The la was given by the diſpoſition of the angels, in the hand of mediator*, that is, Moſes; but the goſpel is reveal to us by the Son of God; a perſon, not only abo Moſes, who was a mere man; but above angels. Th goſpel is the ſubſtance and reality of the types and cer monie

onies, and the very good things themſelves, that were ſcurely repreſented by thoſe ſhadows. It is *a teſtament abliſhed upon better promiſes,* the clear promiſes of ernal life, which were but darkly revealed in the Old eſtament, that being eſtabliſhed either ſolely or prinpally upon temporal promiſes; and it is a perfect and mplete diſpenſation, that hath in it all things requiite to attain its end, and therefore ſhall never ſtand in ed of any further change or alteration. Theſe are ie heads of thoſe arguments which the author of this piſtle does largely diſcourſe upon.

Now, the goſpel having in theſe reſpects the advange of the legal diſpenſation, the Apoſtle doth all along this epiſtle earneſtly exhort the Jews to a conſtant rofeſſion and ſtedfaſt belief of the goſpel, and not to turn back from Chriſtianity to Judaiſm, which was a r leſs perfect inſtitution. Chap. ii. 1. *Therefore we ght to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we ve heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip,* παρρυῶμεν, *leſt we ſhould fall away,* ſo the word may be ndered. And chap. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, leſt ere be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departng from the living God.* And chap. iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entering into his eſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.* And hap. x. 23. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith ithout wavering.*

After which he declares the danger of apoſtaſy, or alling off from the belief and profeſſion of the goſpel which they had entertained: ver. 26. *For if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, here remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin.* He tells them hey would be ſhrewdly tempted to apoſtaſy by the reproaches, afflictions, and perſecutions that they would meet withal: but the promiſes of the goſpel were ſufficient to ſupport and bear up good men under theſe, f they were but firmly perſuaded of the truth of them: nd though they did not for the preſent receive the things promiſed, yet a firm belief of them would carry them through all ſufferings, and make them hold out nder them. *The juſt ſhall live by faith,* ver. 38.

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And having mentioned the power of faith, that is of a confident perſuaſion of the truth and reality of the promiſes of the goſpel to ſupport men under ſufferings, he gives an account how faith uſes to have this influence, ver. 1. *Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for*; ſo we render the word ὑπόστασις: but it might be much better rendered, both according to the frequent uſe of it in the Septuagint, and in the New Teſtament, *a confidence of things hoped for*, that is, a confident expectation of things hoped for, or a firm perſuaſion that our hopes will not be fruſtrated. And as this is more agreeable to the ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle, ſo likewiſe to the common acceptation of this word in the New Teſtament, for which I will appeal to two places. 2 Cor. ix. 4. *That we be not put to ſhame in this confidence of boaſting*, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ. The other text is in this epiſtle, chap. iii. 14. *That we hold faſt the beginning of our confidence*, τὴν ἀρχὴν ὑποστάσεως, which is of the very ſame ſenſe with παῤῥησία, at the 6th verſe. *If we hold faſt the confidence*, παῤῥησίαν, *and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. And the evidence of things not ſeen*, ἔλεγχος, *the conviction*, as being convinced, or perſuaded of the truth of thoſe things, for which we have no ocular or ſenſible demonſtration. Now, if faith in the promiſes of the goſpel do perſuade us and give us ſatisfaction that we ſhall receive a reward, which will outweigh and countervail our preſent ſufferings, then faith is likely to ſupport us under ſufferings.

And that this is no ſtrange thing which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of faith, he ſhews, that, in all ages, faith hath been the principle of all holy and heroic actions. *By it the elders obtained a good report*; it is that which made the holy men of the Old Teſtament ſo famous: and this he proves throughout this chapter, by a large induction of particular inſtances, in which we ſee the power of faith, the wonderful effects of it, and the mighty works it hath done in the world.

But becauſe he ſaid before, that *faith is the evidence*, or *conviction of things not ſeen*, as well as *a confident expectation of things hoped for*, before he comes to inſtance in the effects of faith upon particular perſons in the

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Cl Teſtament, he proves it to be *the evidence of ings not ſeen*, that is, being convinced and perſuaded of tings of which we have no ſenſible and ocular demonſtration, ver. 3. *Through faith we underſtand that the worlds re framed by the word of God, ſo that the things which e ſeen, were not made of things which do appear;* that i though we were not preſent at the making of the orld, nor did ſee it framed; yet we are ſatisfied, and believe that it was made by the powerful word of od, and that all thoſe things which we ſee were not oduced out of things which do now appear, but either imediately out of nothing, or a dark confuſed chaos.

And having thus proved that we may be perſuaded things we do not ſee, of things paſt or future, he mes to the particular inſtances of the holy men of the d Teſtament, in whom the power of faith did appear. begins with Abel, who being perſuaded of the being God, and the perfection and excellency of the dine nature, and conſequently that he was worthy to ſerved with the beſt, by virtue of this faith *offered to God a more excellent ſacrifice than Cain.* The ſecnd inſtance is in Enoch, who being perſuaded of the ing of God, and of his goodneſs to reward them that ve him, was a righteous man, and ſtudious to pleaſe od; and as a reward of this faith and obedience, *od tranſlated him that he ſhould not ſee death:* upon hich the Apoſtle aſſumes, ver. 6. *But without faith it mpoſſible to pleaſe God*: As if he had ſaid, Unleſs a an do believe, and be perſuaded of ſome principles, is impoſſible any man ſhould be religious, or endeaour to do any thing that is pleaſing or acceptable to od: for religion, and the ſervice of God, and an endeaour to pleaſe him, do ſuppoſe at leaſt that I believe nd am perſuaded of theſe two things, of the being, and f the goodneſs of God, that there is ſuch a being as I rve and ſeek to pleaſe, and that his goodneſs is ſuch, at it will not be in vain to ſerve him, he will not let e be a loſer by it.

And that here by pleaſing we are to underſtand in eneral the performing any action of religion, is evident rom the equivalent terms which are uſed in the next words, *For he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is,*

and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him; wher *coming to God,* and *seeking of him,* are of the same im portance with *pleasing him.* Now, to come to God, an seek him, in scripture-phrase signify the sum of religion it being usual, in the language of scripture, to expre the whole of religion by any eminent principle, or part or effect of it, as by the knowledge, remembrance, o fear of God in the Old Testament; by the love of him and faith in him, in the New; by coming to him, seek ing him, calling upon his name, and pleasing of him

Now, that *coming to God,* and *seeking him,* are of th same importance here with *pleasing of him,* will be clea to any that consider the Apostle's reasoning here in th text, which supposeth these to be the same, otherwi there would be no force in his argument. For the pro position which he proves, is, That *without faith it is im possible to please God.* The argument he useth is thi If *every one that comes to God must believe that he is,* &c then *without faith it is impossible to please him;* bu *every one that comes to God must believe that he i* Now, unless *coming to God,* and *seeking him,* be th same thing with *pleasing him,* this would be no goo argument; for there would be four terms in it; bu if these phrases be made equivalent, then the argu ment is good. Thus, if *every one that comes God,* that is, that will *please him, must believe that h is,* &c. then *without faith it is impossible to please him* but *every one that comes to God,* that is, that will *plea him, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder them that diligently seek him,* or *that endeavour to plea him:* therefore *without faith it is impossible to please hi*

Which proposition doth not only signify that faith necessary to religion, and a condition without which cannot be; but implies likewise, that it is a cau or principle of it; not only the foundation upo which all religion must be built, but the fountai from whence it springs. For this I take to be implie in the words, not only that there can be no religion un less we believe a God; but supposing this truth firml believed, that there is a God, it will have a great influ ence upon men to make them religious. For th Apostle having before spoken of the power of fait

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on Abel and Enoch, that it put them upon *pleasing God*, he assumes in the next words, *But without faith*, &c. As if he had said, That ye may know what was the principle of their religion, of their holiness and obedience, let us imagine that a man should believe nothing concerning the being of a God, or the blessedness of those that serve him; what would be the issue? Why, it is certainly, there would be no religion, no such thing as serving of God, or endeavouring to please him; for unless we believe that he is, and that he will reward those that seek to please him, it is impossible, that is, it is unreasonable, to think men should attempt to please him. So that faith is the cause and principle of religion; it is the thing, *quo posito, ponitur effectus; et eo sublato, tollitur.* Do but suppose and admit that a man truly believes there is a God; and he will seek to please him: but if you suppose a man believes no such thing; he will cast off all religion. This is the plain meaning of the words; not, as some have thought, that without faith a man may perform religious actions; but then they would not be accepted, or pleasing to God: but that which the Apostle means is, Without faith it is impossible there should be any religion: not that religious acts should be performed in an acceptable manner; as if Cain had offered as good a sacrifice as Abel, only with made the difference; but Cain did not believe, was not persuaded of the being of God and his excellency, therefore thought to put of God with any thing: Abel believed, and did offer a more excellent sacrifice, not more excellent because it was mixed with faith, but it was more excellent in itself.

The observation therefore from these words is this, That faith is one great principle of all religious actions.

In the handling of this, I shall endeavour,

First, To fix and settle the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it.

Secondly, To confirm the truth of the proposition.

Thirdly, Draw some inferences from hence.

First, To settle and fix the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it. I find that most who write upon this subject have marvellously puzzled themselves with the various

acceptations of this word πίστις, and the verb πιστεύω insomuch that some have undertaken to enumerate above twenty distinct significations of this word. I can not find so many, it may be others may; but hereby instead of clearing the notion of faith, they have involved it, and made it more intricate, and have made men believe, that it is a notion very remote from common understanding: whereas there is not any word that in common use, that is more plain and easy, and which any one may understand better than this of faith and believing. Therefore, in the explication of it, I shall attend to the use of it in common speech, and in all authors, as well profane as sacred; and I shall not guide myself by terms of art, which have been received in the schools and have confounded the meaning of words, by distorting them from the common and received use of them; but shall govern myself by the nature of things to which this word in common use is applied.

I shall remove two acceptations of it which are less usual, and then fix the common and general notion of it, to which all the other more particular significations may be referred. The two less usual acceptations are these.

First, It is sometimes put for the particular grace or virtue which is called fidelity, or faithfulness in our promises and contracts; and in this sense it is sometimes used in common discourse, and in all sorts of writers. I shall only mention a text or two where it is so taken. Matth. xxiii. 23. *And have omitted the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith*, that is, *fidelity*. And Rom. iii. 3. with relation to God, *shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?* that is, his *faithfulness* in his promises. Tit. ii. 13. *Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity*, πίστιν πᾶσαν, *all faith*.

Secondly, It is sometimes put for spiritual gifts, and particularly the gift of miracles, which were wrought by the power of faith. Rom. xii. 3. *According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*; that is, of spiritual gifts of *prophesying*, or *ministry*, or *exhortation*, as it is explained afterward. 1 Cor. xii. 9. *To another given faith by the same spirit*; that is, a power of miracles in general, as learned interpreters think. No

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loth that which is added afterward, that *to another is given the working of miracles*, prejudice this interpretation; for ἐνεργήματα δυναμεων, *the operation of powers*, which we render *of miracles*, seems to signify some special sort of miracles, not the power of miracles in general. And this seems to be favoured by the acceptation of it in the next chapter, ver. 2. *And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains;* where faith is undoubtedly taken for the power of miracles.

These being removed, as very alien and remote from the common and usual acceptation of the word, I come now to fix the general notion of faith, to which all other acceptations of it may easily be reduced: and it is this.

Faith is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing; concerning the truth of any proposition, concerning the existence, or futurition, or lawfulness, or convenience, or possibility, or goodness of any thing, or the contrary; or concerning the credit of a person, or the contrary. And this notion is not only agreeable to the proper notion of the word πίστις, which comes from πείθω, *to persuade*, but is warranted from the common use of it in this latitude. It is ordinary for men to say, they believe or are persuaded such a proposition is true or false, such a thing is or is not, such an event will be or will not be, that such an action is lawful or unlawful, such a thing is good or bad, convenient or inconvenient, possible or impossible to be done; or that they believe such a person, or do not believe him. And I could shew from scripture, that believing is applied to all these matters, and many more; I will only instance in one or two.

That faith is frequently used for the persuasion of the truth of a doctrine, or of the veracity of God or Christ, I shall not need to produce any texts, there are so many.

That faith is used for a persuasion of the lawfulness of an action, the 14th chapter to the Romans doth abundantly testify. Ver. 2. *One believeth that he may eat all things;* that is, is persuaded in his mind, that all sorts of meat are lawful without distinction. Ver. 22. *Hast thou faith?* that is, art thou persuaded or satisfied

tisfied in thy mind of the lawfulneſs of thoſe indifferent things he had been ſpeaking of? Ver. 23. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith: for whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin*; that is, whatſoever is not done with the perſuaſion and ſatisfaction of our minds that we may lawfully do it, is ſin. I ſhall trouble you with no more inſtances.

Now, this being the general notion of faith, that it is a perſuaſion of the mind concerning any thing, from hence by a metonymy it comes to be put for the argument whereby this perſuaſion is wrought in us. Hence it is, that among the rhetoricians πίστις are any kind of argument or proof which orators make uſe of to perſuade men; and there is one place in the New Teſtament, where πίστις ſeems to be uſed in this ſenſe, or very near it, Acts xvii. 31. *Becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world*, &c *whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead*, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν *having offered faith to all men*: that is, having given us this argument for the proof of it, *that he raiſed Chriſt from the dead.*

Sometimes is is put for the object of this perſuaſion or the matter or thing whereof we are perſuaded. And thus, frequently in the New Teſtament, the goſpel which is the object of our faith, the thing which we believe, is called faith. And thus you find it uſed in the phraſe of *obedience to the faith*, that is, to the goſpel Acts vi. 7. Rom. i. 5. xvi. 26. And in this ſenſe faith that is, the goſpel, is frequently oppoſed to the diſpenſation of the law, Rom. iii. 27. 31. and x. 16. Gal. 23. *He that perſecuted us in times paſt, now preacheth the faith which once he deſtroyed.* Gal. iii. 2. the *hearing of the goſpel* is called *the hearing of faith*; ver. 23 *Before faith came*; and ver. 25. *But after that faith is come.* Eph. iv. 5. *There is one faith*, that is, one goſpel which we believe. 1 Tim. iv. 6. *Nouriſhed up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.*

The oppoſites to faith are unbelief and credulity. Unbelief, which is a not being perſuaded of a thing, the deficient extreme; or doubting, if it prevail to a degree of unbelief: and credulity, which is an eaſine

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) believe things without any probable argument to in-uce our perſuaſion, is the redundant extreme.

The ſeat or ſubject of faith is the mind, or the heart, s the ſcripture uſually calls it. *With the heart man elieves*, that is, *with the ſoul:* for I do not underſtand ny real diſtinction of faculties; but if you will diſtin-guiſh them, the proper ſeat of this perſuaſion is the un-derſtanding; the immediate effect of it is upon the will; by which it works upon the affections and the life.

And faith in this general notion is not oppoſed to error, and knowledge, and opinion; but comprehends all theſe under it. For if a man be perſuaded of that which is falſe, he believes a lie, as the ſcripture expreſ-ſeth it; a man may be certainly perſuaded of a thing, that is, firmly believe it, which is knowledge; a man may be probably perſuaded of a thing, that is, believe it with ſome diffidence and uncertainty, and that is opinion.

But for our better underſtanding of this general no-tion of faith, we will take into conſideration theſe four things.

I. The cauſe of it, or the argument whereby it is wrought.

II. The degrees of it, and the difference of them.

III. The natural efficacy and operation of it.

IV. The ſeveral kinds of it.

I. We will conſider the cauſe of faith, or the argu-ment whereby it is wrought. Now, all the arguments whereby faith may be wrought in us, that is, a perſuaſion of any thing, will, I think, fall under one of theſe four heads; ſenſe, experience, reaſons drawn from the thing, or the authority and teſtimony of ſome perſon.

1. Senſe. Hence it is commonly ſaid, that *ſeeing is believing*, that is, one of the beſt arguments to perſuade us of any thing. That faith may be wrought by this argument, appears both from the nature of the thing, nothing being more apt to perſuade us of any thing than our ſenſes; and from ſeveral expreſſions in ſcripture. I will inſtance in one for all, John xx. 8. *Then went in alſo the other diſciple into the ſepulchre, and he ſaw, and believed.* And whereas ſcripture oppoſeth faith to ſight;

ſight; as 2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith, and not by ſight.* Heb. xi. 1. *It is the evidence of things not ſeen*; we are to underſtand that only concerning a belief of the things of another world, which are futurities, and inviſible, which the Apoſtle is there ſpeaking of; or of things which are of the ſame nature with theſe, as things paſt: not but that a man may very well be induced to believe a thing by his ſenſes.

2. Experience; which though it may be ſenſible and then it is the ſame argument with ſenſe; yet ſometimes it is not, and then it is an argument diſtinct from it. As for example, a man may by experience be perſuaded or induced to believe this propoſition, That his will is free, that he can do this, or not do it; which is a better argument than a demonſtration to the contrary, if there could be one.

3. Reaſons drawn from the thing; which may either be neceſſary and concluding, or elſe only probable, and plauſible.

4. The authority and teſtimony of ſome credible perſon. Now, two things give authority and credit to the relation, or teſtimony, or aſſertion of a perſon concerning any thing; ability, and integrity. Ability, if he can be preſumed to have a competent knowledge of what he relates, or aſſerts, or teſtifies; and integrity, if he may be preſumed to be honeſt in his relation, and free from any deſign, or will to deceive. And to theſe heads, I think, all arguments of belief may be reduced.

II. The ſecond thing to be conſidered is the degrees of faith, and the difference of them. And that there are degrees, I take for granted, though I ſhall afterwards have occaſion to prove it in a divine faith; and theſe depend perfectly upon the capacity of the perſon that believes, or is perſuaded Now, the capacity, or incapacity of perſons are infinitely various, and not to be reduced to theory; but ſuppoſing a competent capacity in the perſon, then the degrees of faith or perſuaſion take their difference from the arguments, or motives, or inducements which are uſed to perſuade. Where ſenſe is the argument, there is the higheſt and firmeſt degree of faith, or perſuaſion. Next to that is experience, which is beyond any argument or reaſon from the

he thing. The faith, or perſuaſion which is wrought n us by reaſons drawn from the thing, the degrees of t are, as the reaſons are: if they be neceſſary and concluding, it is firm and certain in its kind: if only probable, according to the degrees of probability, it hath nore or leſs of doubting mixed with it. Laſtly, the faith which is wrought in us by teſtimony or authority of a perſon, takes its degree from the credit of the perſon, that is, his ability and integrity. Now, becauſe *all men are liars*, that is, either may deceive, or be deceived, their teſtimony partakes of their infirmity, and ſo does the degree of perſuaſion wrought by it: but God being both infallible and true, and conſequently it being impoſſible that he ſhould either deceive, or be deceived, his teſtimony begets the firmeſt perſuaſion, and the higheſt degree of faith in its kind. But then it is to be conſidered, that there not being a revelation of a revelation *in infinitum;* that this is a divine teſtimony and revelation, we can only have rational aſſurance; and the degree of the faith, or perſuaſion which is wrought by a divine teſtimony, will be according to the ſtrength of the arguments which we have to perſuade us that ſuch a teſtimony is divine.

III. For the efficacy or operation of faith, we are to conſider that the things we may believe or be perſuaded of, are of two ſorts. Either, 1. They are ſuch as do not concern me: and then the mind reſts in a naked and ſimple belief of them, and a faith or perſuaſion of ſuch things has no effect upon me; but is apt to have, if ever it happen that the matter do concern me: or elſe, 2. The thing I believe or am perſuaded of doth concern me; and then it hath ſeveral effects, according to the nature of the thing I am perſuaded of, or the degree of the perſuaſion, or the capacity of the perſon that believes or is perſuaded. If the thing believed be of great moment, the effect of the faith is proportionable. *cæteris paribus;* and ſo according to the degree of the perſuaſion: but if the perſon be indiſpoſed to the proper effects of ſuch a perſuaſion by the power of contrary habits, as it often happens, the effect will be obtained with more difficulty, and may poſſibly be totally defeated, by caſting off the perſuaſion: for while it remains,

mains, it will operate, and endeavour, and ſtrive to work its proper effect. For example, a man may believe that wine is very pernicious to him; and yet a ſtrong inclination to it may render it very difficult for this perſuaſion to work its proper effect upon him, which is to leave off wine, and may, at length, wholly defeat it, by furniſhing him with ſome colour of argument that may perſuade him otherwiſe.

IV. For the kinds of faith, they are ſeveral, according to the variety of objects or things believed. I ſhall reduce them all under theſe two general heads.

1. Faith is either civil or human; under which I comprehend the perſuaſion of things moral, and natural, and political, and the like: or,

2. Divine and religious, that is, a perſuaſion of things that concern religion. I know not whether theſe terms be proper, nor am I very ſolicitous, becauſe I know none fitter, and tell you what I mean by them.

The firſt kind of faith concerning things human and civil, I ſhall not ſpeak of, it being beſide my deſign.

The ſecond, which I call a religious and divine faith, comprehends three things under it, which are diſtinctly to be conſidered.

1. A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature, as the exiſtence of a God, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate.

2. A perſuaſion of things ſupernatural, and revealed.

3. A perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation. Theſe I deſign fully to handle. Thus I have prepared materials for a large diſcourſe, which, though it be neceſſary, is, I am ſenſible, but too tedious, and yet poſſibly more tedious to me than you.

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SERMON CCXX.

Of a religious and divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I came to treat of a religious and divine faith, which, I told you, comprehends under it three things, which I now proceed to conſider diſtinctly.

Firſt, A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A perſuaſion of things ſupernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation.

Firſt, A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, ſuch as the light of nature could diſcover; ſuch are the exiſtence of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate. The things to be inquired concerning this kind of faith are theſe.

I. Whether this be truly and properly called faith.

II. What are the arguments whereby it is wrought.

III. Whether it admit of degrees or not, and what differences are obſervable in them.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of it.

V. In what ſenſe it may be ſaid to be divine faith.

I. Whether it may truly and properly be called faith, or not? If the general notion of faith which I have fixed before, *viz.* that it is a perſuaſion of the mind concerning any thing, be a true notion of faith, then there is no doubt but this may as properly be called faith as any thing can be; becauſe a man may be perſuaded in his mind concerning theſe things, that there

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is a God, that our ſouls are immortal, that there is another ſtate after this life.

But beſides this, if the ſcripture ſpeaks properly, as we have reaſon to believe it does, eſpecially when it treats profeſſedly of any thing, as the Apoſtle here does, then this queſtion is fully decided: for it is evident to any one that will but read this verſe, out of which I have taken my text, that the Apoſtle doth here in this place ſpeak of this kind of faith, that is, a belief or perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion. For after the Apoſtle had ſaid, that *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God;* he immediately inſtanceth in the belief of the principles of natural religion, as neceſſary to the pleaſing of God, that is, to make a man religious. *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is;* there is the exiſtence of God, the firſt principle of natural religion: *and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him:* which implies the other two, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; for, if good men ſhall be rewarded, there muſt be a ſubject capable of ſuch rewards, which brings in the immortality of the ſoul; and there muſt be a ſeaſon for theſe rewards, which, becauſe they are ſeldom beſtowed in this world, there muſt be a ſeaſon when they ſhall, which brings in a future ſtate after this life. So that whoever denies that a perſuaſion of theſe principles of natural religion may properly be called faith, he quarrels with the Apoſtle, and does not correct me, but the ſcriptures.

II. What are the arguments whereby this faith or perſuaſion of theſe principles of natural religion is wrought? You may remember that I reduced all thoſe arguments, whereby any kind of faith or perſuaſion is wrought in us, to theſe four heads; ſenſe, experience, reaſons drawn from the thing, and the teſtimony or authority of ſome perſon. Now, a faith or perſuaſion of theſe principles cannot be wrought in us by ſenſe: for *no man hath ſeen God at any time*, and being a pure ſpirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. Nor can the ſoul, or any mode of its exiſtence, fall under any of our ſenſes; nor a future ſtate; becauſe ſenſe is only of things preſent. Nor can it be wrought in us merely by experience: for no man can conclude

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from any thing he experienceth in himſelf, that there is a God, unleſs he be firſt perſuaded of it by other arguments; and the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, are things which none in this life can experience. Nor can the authority or teſtimony of any perſon be the argument that induceth that perſuaſion. Not any human authority: for theſe things are of ſuch conſequence, and ſo much depends upon them, that is, the belief of them puts us upon ſo many things, which men would not do if they did not believe them; as particularly the venturing of our lives upon the account of religion, and all our worldly intereſts, if occaſion call for it; that it were a fond thing to take matters of ſuch moment and importance upon any man's bare word, without other aſſurance of them. Nor can the teſtimony or authority of God be the argument that perſuades me of the exiſtence of a God. I grant, that for the other two, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, it is an excellent, and may be a ſufficient argument. Though that theſe may be proved likewiſe by other arguments without a revelation, is evident in the Heathens, who by the light of nature did aſſent to them without a revelation. But a divine revelation cannot poſſibly be an argument inducing me to believe the exiſtence of a God, for this plain reaſon; becauſe a divine revelation can be no argument to any that is not perſuaded that it is a divine revelation: but before I can be perſuaded that any revelation is from God, I muſt be perſuadeed there is a God; and if ſo, there is no need of this argument to prove to me that there is one: and therefore you do not find it any where revealed in all the ſcripture, that there is a God. The ſcripture often declares that Jehovah is *the true and living God*, and that *beſides him there is no other*: but it doth not reveal, but every where ſuppoſe, that there is one.

It remains then, that it muſt be another kind of argument whereby we muſt be perſuaded of the exiſtence of a God, and that is by ſuch reaſons as may be drawn from things themſelves to perſuade us hereof; as either from the notion and idea which we have of a God, that he is a being that hath all perfections, whereof neceſſary exiſtence is one, and conſequently that he muſt

be; or elſe from the univerſal conſent of all nations and the generality of perſons agreeing in this apprehenſion, which cannot be attributed reaſonably to any othe cauſe, than to impreſſions ſtamped upon our underſtandings by God himſelf; or, which is moſt plain of all, fron this viſible frame of the world, which we cannot, withou great violence to our underſtandings, impute to any o ther cauſe than a being endowed with infinite goodneſs and power, and wiſdom, which is what we call God.

As for the other two principles of natural religion the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; afte we believe a God, we may be perſuaded of theſe fron divine revelation; and that doth give us the higheſt and fimeſt aſſurance of them in the reſurrection o Chriſt from the dead. Yet I do not find but that theſe alſo are rather ſuppoſed, than expreſsly revealed in th Bible. Indeed the immortality of the ſoul may be infer red from ſeveral places of ſcripture, and the tenor of th whole Bible: and ſo a future ſtate, which, as for the thing itſelf, ſeems to be ſuppoſed as a thing acknowledged b natural light; only the ſcripture hath revealed the cir cumſtances of it more particularly to us, and given u higher aſſurance of the thing: but if there were no re velation, men might be perſuaded of theſe; and ſo th Heathens were by arguments drawn partly from the o perations of the ſoul, which will almoſt perſuade an man that the ſoul is immortal; it being altogether uni maginable how a principle that is nothing elſe but mat ter, can either underſtand, or determine itſelf by it own will; all the motions of matter that we know o or can imagine, being neceſſary: and partly from th juſtice and goodneſs of God. The conſideration c God's goodneſs would perſuade a man, that as he mad all things very good, ſo he made them of the longe duration they were capable of: and the juſtice of Go would eaſily induce a man to believe, ſeeing the provi dence of God doth generally, in this life, deal promi ſcuouſly with good and bad men, that there ſhall be day which will make a difference, and every man ſhal receive according to his works.

But I do not intend to inſiſt upon theſe arguments all that I deſign, is to ſhew what kind of arguments d

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work a faith and perſuaſion in men concerning theſe principles of natural religion; and they are reaſons drawn from the thing.

And it is not always neceſſary to the working of this faith or perſuaſion, that theſe reaſons ſhould neceſſarily, yea, or truly conclude the principle to be believed: if they do it probably, and it appear ſo to me, it is enough to beget a perſuaſion in me of ſuch a thing. There are many men entertain the greateſt truths, and are firmly perſuaded of them, upon an incompetent argument, and ſuch as might perſuade them of any thing elſe as well; and ſuch perſons, if they have capacity and underſtanding, they are rather happy than wiſe in their religion. It falls out well that they happen to be in the right; for they might have been in the wrong upon the ſame terms. But if the perſons who believe the principles of religion on inſufficient arguments, and their belief have a real effect upon them, as it will, if it be true and permanent; if they be ignorant, and ſuch as want the ordinary advantages of improving their knowledge, they are wiſe enough; that is, they are as wiſe as God's providence hath made them, and the circumſtances of their education, and the condition of their life, will let them be.

The third thing to be inquired is, Whether this faith or perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion admit degrees, or not? and what differences are obſervable in them? That it does admit degrees, that is, that a man may be more or leſs perſuaded of the truth of theſe principles, is evident from the Heathens: ſome of whom did yield a more firm and unſhaken aſſent to them; others entertained them with a more faint perſuaſion of them, eſpecially of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, about which moſt of them had many qualms and doubts. Of all the Heathens, Socrates ſeems to have had the trueſt and firmeſt perſuaſion of theſe things; which he did not only teſtify in words, but by the conſtancy, and calmneſs, and ſedate courage which he manifeſted at his death. Indeed in his diſcourſe before his death, he ſays, "He did not know whether his ſoul "ſhall remain after his body, and whether there be a hap-"pineſs reſerved for good men in another world; but

" he thought so, and had such hopes of it, that he was " very willing to venture his life upon these hopes." Which words, though they seem to be spoke doubtingly, as the manner of the academy was; yet considering his manner of speaking, which was modest, and not peremptory and dogmatical, they signify as great a confidence as he had of any thing, and they are high expressions of assurance. For we may believe that the man who dies for any thing, how modestly soever he may express himself, is very well assured of the truth of it. So that this faith and persuasion admits of degrees, the difference whereof is to be resolved partly into the capacity of the persons who believe, and partly into the strength, or at least appearance of strength in the arguments whereby it is wrought.

The fourth thing to be inquired is, What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith or persuasion? Now, that, in a word, is natural religion, which consists in apprehensions of God suitable to his nature, and affections towards him suitable to these apprehensions, and actions suitable to both. He that believes there is such a being in the world as God, that is, one infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, and just, and holy, and, in a word, clothed with all excellency, will have a great esteem and reverence for him, and love to him, which he will testify in those outward expressions of respect which we call worship. He that believes that this being is the original of all good, that he made the world, and all the creatures in it, and preserves and governs them, he will depend upon him, and seek to him for every good thing, and acknowledge him for the author of them; which brings in prayer and thanksgiving. He that believes that he owes his being to God, and all the blessings of his life, will think it reasonable that he should be at his disposal, will be willing to be governed by his laws, and ready to submit to his pleasure; which brings in obedience and submission to the will of God. He that believes there is another life after this, wherein men shall be rewarded or punished, according as they have demeaned themselves well or ill in this world, he will be encouraged to piety and virtue, and afraid to do any thing which his own reason

ason tells him is displeasing to the Deity, as he can-
ot but believe every thing is, that is contrary to the
ature of God, or the perfection of his own nature, or
e good order and happiness of the world; which
ings in temperance, and justice, and all other real
rtues. And that the belief of these principles had
is effect upon several of the Heathens, to make them
a good degree religious and virtuous, I doubt not;
e moral and honest lives of many of them give real
stimony of this; which natural religion and morality
theirs, how far it may avail them for their good, we
e not concerned to determine. This we are sure of,
at it will make their condition more tolerable in an-
ther world; and if they fall under condemnation, it
ill mitigate and allay their misery.

V. In what sense this faith or persuasion of the prin-
ples of natural religion may be said to be divine. In
ese two respects.

1. In respect of the object of it, or matters to be be-
eved, which are divine, and do immediately concern
eligion, in opposition to that which I call a civil and
uman faith, which is of such things as do not immedi-
tely concern God and religion.

2. In respect of the divine effects of it, which are to
ake men religious, and like God. And a faith may
s properly be said to be divine in respect of the object
f it, as in respect of the argument whereby it is wrought;
o that a faith of the principles of natural religion is as
ruly divine, though it be not wrought in us by the ar-
uments of divine testimony and authority, as a faith of
he matters of divine revelation contained in the holy
criptures: for why a faith may not as well be said to
e divine for its relation to God as the object of it,
s for its relation to the testimony of God as the
ause of it, I cannot understand.

Secondly, The second sort of faith, which I call di-
ine or religious, is a persuasion of things supernatural-
y revealed, of things which are not known by natural
light, but by some more immediate manifestation and
discovery from God. Thus we find our Saviour, Matth.
xvi. 15. 16. 17. opposeth divine revelation to the dis-
covery of natural reason and light. He asks his di-

ſcip'es, whom they believed him to be: *Whom ſay ye tha I am? And Simon Peter anſwered and ſaid, Thou art th Chriſt*, that is, the Meſſias, *the Son of the living Go And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed art tho Simon Bar-jona; for fleſh and blood hath not revealed i unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven;* where revelation or diſcovery from fleſh and blood, is oppo ſed to revelation from God; *fleſh and blood* being a He brew phraſe or manner of ſpeaking, ſignifying a mer man, or ſomething merely human. So we find th phraſe uſed, Eph. vi. 12. *We wreſtle not againſt fleſ and blood; but againſt principalities, and powers, an ſpiritual wickedneſs*; that is, the enemies we are to con tend with are not only men, but devils; and which i nearer to our purpoſe, Gal. i. 16. where the Apoſtl would expreſs to us, that he received not his commiſſio from men, but immediately from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt he tells us, that *when it pleaſed God, who ſeparated hi from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, t reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among th Heathen, immediately he conferred not with fleſh and blood* the word is προσανεθέμην, *I did not apply myſelf to fleſ and blood;* that is, I did not go to men to receive my commiſſion from them: for ſo he explains it in th next words, *Neither went I up to Jeruſalem, to then that were apoſtles before me*; that is, I did not apply myſelf to the apoſtles, to derive any authority from them to preach the goſpel, becauſe he had no need o that, being called immediately by Chriſt to this work which words are nothing elſe but a farther explicatio of what he had ſaid before, ver. 11. 12. *I certify you brethren, that the goſpel which was preached by me, i not after man: for I neither received it of man, neithe was taught it, but by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.* S accordingly here our Saviour tells Peter, that this truth *that Chriſt was the Meſſias, the Son of the living God was not revealed to him by man,* nor by any mere humar principle or teſtimony, *but by his Father which was in heaven;* that is, by the teſtimony which God himſel gave of him, in the holy and divine goſpel which he taught, and thoſe miracles which he wrought in confir mation of it.

So

So that this kind of faith is a perſuaſion of ſuch things as are not known by natural light, nor diſcovered to us by men, but ſome way or other revealed by God; I ſay, ſome way or other, for the ways of God's revealing and manifeſting himſelf to us are various and arbitrary. God may chuſe what ways he pleaſeth to diſcover himſelf to us by. So the Apoſtle tells us, Heb. i. *God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the fathers by the prophets.* God revealed himſelf as *at ſeveral times*, by ſeveral ſteps and degrees; ſo *in various manners*; ſometimes by viſions, ſometimes by dreams, ſometimes by oracles, ſometimes by a ſpirit of prophecy, and ſometimes by a voice from heaven, ſometimes by a ſecret and gentle inſpiration. Now, it matters not which of theſe ways God chuſeth to reveal himſelf to us, provided we have ſufficient evidence and grounds of aſſurance that the thing is revealed by God.

As to us, theſe extraordinary ways of revelation are now ceaſed, and we have a fixed and ſtanding revelation, that is, the records of thoſe revelations which God formerly made to holy men; and this is the holy ſcriptures, or the Bible, which is a ſyſtem or collection of things ſupernaturally revealed.

Now, if this faith be conſidered as reſtrained to a part of divine revelation, *viz.* the doctrine of the goſpel, revealed to the world by Jeſus Chriſt, then it is properly *Chriſtian faith*, which frequently in the New Teſtament is called faith, κατ' ἐξοχήν, by way of excellency and eminency, this being the moſt eminent and perfect revelation which God hath made of himſelf to the world, which the Apoſtle at the beginning of this epiſtle advanced above all thoſe former revelations which God hath made of himſelf to the fathers, thoſe being by his ſervants and miniſters, prophets and angels: *But in theſe laſt days God hath revealed himſelf to us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things*, and advanced to a dignity above that of men or angels.

And with relation to this faith of the goſpel, Chriſtians are peculiarly and eminently called believers. 1 Theſſ. ii. 10. *You know how unblameably we behaved ourſelves among you that believe*, that is, among you Chriſtians.

ans. 2 Theſſ. i. 10. *When he ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all them that believe,* meaning the Chriſtians that entertained the goſpel. And upon the ſame account the Apoſtle calls the whole ſociety, or body of Chriſtians, the houſehold of faith, Gal. vi. 10.

But now I am conſidering faith, not in this more narrow and reſtrained ſenſe, for a belief or perſuaſion of the doctrine of the goſpel; but in a more large and comprehenſive ſenſe, for a perſuaſion of all things that are ſupernaturally revealed, that is, of all things contained in the holy ſcriptures.

Now, all the matters of divine revelation, which are contained in the book of holy ſcripture, may, I think, be reduced to one of theſe ſix heads.

1. They are either hiſtory, or relation of ſome perſon, or matter of fact: and a faith of the hiſtorical part of ſcripture is nothing elſe but a perſuaſion, that thoſe narrations, or relations, are true. Or,

2. A prophecy, or prediction of ſome event. Now, a faith of the prophetical part of ſcripture is a perſuaſion, that the event foretold will certainly come to paſs. Or,

3. A doctrine: ſuch as are all thoſe propoſitions in ſcripture, which declare to us the nature or properties of God, the nature and office of Chriſt, that he is the eternal Son of God, that is, true God, the Meſſias, or Saviour of the world, the King, Prieſt, and Prophet of his church, and the like. Now, a faith of the doctrinal part of ſcripture is a perſuaſion, that thoſe propoſitions, which contain theſe doctrines, are true. Or,

4. Laws for the ordering and governing of our ſpirits and lives, under which I comprehend all the precepts and prohibitions of ſcripture, which are the matter of our duty. Now, a faith of theſe is a perſuaſion, that God hath commanded, and forbidden ſuch things; and conſequently that they are neceſſary to be obſerved by us. Or,

5. Promiſes of good things, either with relation to this life, or the other. Now, a faith of the promiſes is a perſuaſion, or a confident expectation that they will be accompliſhed. And thus the Apoſtle deſcribes the faith of the promiſes of another world, at the firſt verſe of

this chapter, that it is the *ſubſtance of things hoped r*, ὑπόστασις, that is, *a confident expectation* that the pro-iſes of the goſpel, which are the matter of our hope, all be accompliſhed; *and the evidence of things not en*, a being convinced of the certainty and reality of ture and inviſible things. And thus likewiſe the A-oſtle explains to us the faith of Abraham, in reference the promiſes of God, to give him a ſon, Rom. iv. 21. *e was fully perſuaded, that what God had promiſed, he as able to perform.* Or,

6. Threatenings. Now, a faith of the threatenings a perſuaſion of the danger we incur, if we neglect our ty: that is, a belief that God juſtly may, and will aving confirmed his threatenings with an oath, which a ſign of the immutable determination of the divine ill) inflict thoſe puniſhments upon us, which he hath reatened, in caſe we diſobey his law. Theſe ſix heads o, I think, contain all, I am ſure, the moſt principal atters of divine revelation; which I have more care-lly diſtinguiſhed, becauſe ſome of them are of a diſ-nct and peculiar conſideration from the reſt, as will fterwards appear.

Having thus, as plainly and briefly as I could, open-d to you, what I mean by this ſecond ſort of divine aith, which is a perſuaſion of things ſupernaturally re-ealed, I now come to ſatisfy ſuch inquiries about this, s may be moſt material. And here I ſhall proceed up-n thoſe heads of inquiry which I handled when I ſpake f the firſt ſort of divine faith.

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called aith?

II. What is the argument whereby this faith is wrought?

III. Whether it admit of degrees, and what are the differences of them?

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith?

V. In what reſpects it may be ſaid to be divine?

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called faith? And that it may, is evident, becauſe the general definition of faith agrees to it: for a man may be per-ſuaded in his mind concerning things ſupernaturally re-vealed; and the ſcripture every where calls a perſuaſion

of

of these matters, by the name of *faith*. But besides t
it seems this is the adequate and only notion of fai
as it hath been fixed by the schools, and it is beco
a term of art. For the definition that the schools g
of faith is this; that it is *an assent to a thing credible*,
credible. Now, say they, that is credible which re
upon the testimony of a credible person; and cor
quently a *human faith* is that which relies upon hum
testimony; and a *divine faith*, that which relies u
the testimony or authority of God: which definiti
though it be short and imperfect, (being indeed not
definition of faith in general, but of a particular ki
of faith, *viz.* that which is wrought by the argum
which we call *testimony or authority*, and consequen
excludes a belief of the principles of natural religi
and a belief that the scriptures are the word of G
from being faith), yet this shews thus much, that
agree in this, that a persuasion of things supernatural
revealed is truly and properly faith.

II. What is the argument whereby this faith, or p
suasion of things supernaturally revealed, is wrought
us? And this, by the general consent of all, is the te
mony or authority of God, some way or other reve
ing these things to us; whose infallible and unerri
knowledge, together with his goodness and authori
gives us the highest assurance, that he neither can
deceived himself, nor will deceive us in any thing th
he reveals to us. I say, the testimony or authority
God, some way or other revealing things to us, is t
argument whereby a faith of any supernatural revela
ons is wrought in us: but if we restrain all supernatu
revelations to the Bible, as I told you we know of
other, then the particular kind of testimony where
this faith is wrought in us, is the written word of Go

III. As to the degrees of this faith. Supposing m
sufficiently satisfied that the scriptures are the word
God, that is, a divine revelation; then all those w
are sufficiently satisfied of this, do equally believe t
things contained in the scriptures. For if men be on
fully satisfied that God hath spoken any thing, I thi
no man makes the least doubt but what God says
true. Now, there can be no degrees of faith, whe
the

the is no doubt to the contrary; all the degrees that
r in faith, arising from a greater or less mixture of
doubting. So that those who do not at all doubt but
th: the scriptures are the word of God, have the same
degree of persuasion concerning the matters contain-
ed in them: and that no man doubts whether what
God says is true, ariseth from the fixed and constant no-
tion which men universally have of God, that he is infallible
and true. Therefore we find, Matth. xxi. 25. when
our Saviour puts the dilemma to the Pharisees, con-
cerning the baptism of John, *Whether it were from hea-
ven, or of men?* that *they reasoned with themselves,
saying, If we shall say, from heaven; he will say unto us,
Why did ye not then believe him?* Which kind of reasoning
imports thus much, that it is universally acknowledged,
that no man can in reason make the least doubt of
that which he believes to be from God. Therefore a
man would wonder what Becanus the Jesuit meant,
unless it were to abuse the prophets and apostles, when
he says, tom 2. of his school-divinity, that the pro-
phets and apostles had *evidentiam revelationis, non autem
evidentiam primæ veritatis: tametsi enim evidenter cog-
noscerent Deum esse, qui ipsis revelabat mysteria fidei, non
omnes evidenter cognoscebant Deum esse summe veracem,
qui nec falli potuit, nec fallere;* that is, "Though it
was sufficiently evident to the Prophets and Apostles,
that those revelations which they had were from
God; yet it was not evident to them, that divine re-
velations are true: for though they did evidently
know that there was a God, who revealed to them
the mysteries of faith; yet they did not evidently
know that God was infallible and true, who could nei-
ther deceive, nor be deceived." By which he doth
not only make the prophets and apostles idiots, and de-
stitute of one of the most common notions of human
nature, which is, *that God is infallible and true;* but he
doth likewise make all divine revelation useless, and to no
purpose. For to what purpose is it for a man to be sa-
tisfied, that God reveals such a thing to him, if he be
in the mean time unsatisfied, whether what God reveals
is true? for no man that is unsatisfied, whether what
God reveals be true, can, upon any tolerable ground of
reason,

reaſon, yield a firm aſſent to a divine revelation. B
it is pity to ſpend time in confuting any thing whi
confutes itſelf by its own abſurdity, and its direct co
tradiction to the common notions of human nature.
proceed therefore.

Suppoſing any man be unſatisfied, and do make a
doubt whether thoſe books called the holy ſcriptures,
any of them, be the word of God, that is, a divine r
velation; proportionably to the degree of his doubti
concerning the divine authority of the ſcriptures, the
will be an abatement of his faith, as to the things co
tained in them; for he that believes a thing merely u
on the credit or teſtimony of ſuch a perſon; ſo muc
reaſon as he hath to doubt, whether ſuch a perſon di
ſpeak, or teſtify ſuch a thing; ſo much reaſon he hat
to doubt whether the thing be true.

And upon this account I think it is, that the ſcriptu
ſpeaks of degrees of faith, of growing and increaſing i
faith, of a ſtrong faith, that is, ſuch a faith as was, e
ther wholly or in a great meaſure, free from doubting
and of a weak faith, that is, ſuch a faith as had a gre
mixture of doubting, by which we are not to unde
ſtand, that they doubted of the truth of any thing
which they were ſatisfied by a divine revelation; b
that they doubted whether ſuch things were divine r
velations, or not. So that the great doubt of the d
ſciples was, whether Chriſt were the true Meſſias, an
really the Son of God: for ſo far as they were ſatisfie
of that, they could not doubt of any thing he ſaid.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of th
faith? The proper and genuine effects of the belief of th
ſcriptures, in general, is the conformity of our hear
and lives to what we believe; that is, to be ſuch pe
ſons, and to live ſuch lives as it becomes thoſe who d
heartily believe, and are really perſuaded of the trut
of the holy ſcriptures. And if this be a conſtant an
abiding perſuaſion, it will produce this effect; but wit
more or leſs difficulty, according to the diſpoſition c
the ſubject, and the weakneſs or ſtrength of contrar
habits and inclinations. More particularly, the effects c
this faith are according to the nature of the matter be
lieved. If it be a hiſtory or relation of things paſt, o
prophec

things to come, it hath an effect upon men so far as e history or prophecy doth concern them. If it be a octrine, it hath the effect which the particular nature id tendency of such doctrine requires. For instance, e doctrine of God's goodness is apt to inflame us with ve to him; of his power and justice, with a fear and ve of him. This doctrine, that Christ is the Saviour the world, the proper effect of it is to make men ly upon him for salvation; and so of the rest. If it be precept, the proper effect of it is obedience: and hence is that unbelief and disobedience are frequently it for one another in scripture; and disobedience is opsed to faith, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient*, c. where the disobedient are opposed to *them that lieve*. And so likewise those who neglect any duty religion, and do any thing notoriously unworthy their profession, are said to *deny the faith*, 1 Tim. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* ow does he *deny the faith?* In disobeying the precepts the Christian religion, which chargeth us with such itural and moral duties. If it be a promise, the proer effect of it is encouragement to obedience by hopes the thing promised. If a threatening, the proper fect of it is to restrain men from sin and disobedience.

V. In what sense this faith of things supernaturally vealed, may be said to be a *divine faith? Ans.* Not ly in respect of the matter and object of it, which e divine things, such as concern God and religion; id in respect of the divine effects it hath upon those ho believe these things; (for in these two respects a rsuasion of the principles of natural religion may be id to be a *divine faith*): but likewise in respect of the gument whereby it is wrought, which is a divine testiony. As for the efficient cause, the Spirit of God, at does not immediately belong to this: for the Spit of God doth not, speaking properly, persuade us mediately of the truth of things supernaturally realed; but mediately, by persuading us of the truth the revelation: for to believe a thing to be true, which

we are perſuaded is revealed by God, is ſo natural and conſequent upon ſuch a perſuaſion, that it doth not ſeem to require any new work of the Spirit. And if this be all the work of the Spirit, to perſuade men that ſuch a revelation is divine; it will be moſt proper to ſpeak of this, when I come to the third ſort of faith, which is a perſuaſion of a divine revelation, that it is ſuch which, becauſe it hath many difficulties in it, deſerves a more large and particular conſideration.

SERMON CCXXI.

Of the faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.

The third ſermon on this text.

I Have obſerved that a religious and divine faith comprehends under it three things.

Firſt, A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A perſuaſion of things ſupernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation.

The two former of theſe I have conſidered, and now proceed to the

Third ſort of faith, which I call divine or religious, *viz.* a perſuaſion concerning a divine revelation, that it is ſuch; which I diſtinguiſh from the former thus. The former is a perſuaſion concerning the things which are revealed from God, that they are true: this is a perſuaſion concerning the revelation itſelf, that it is divine and from God.

F

For the opening of this there are many things to be taken into consideration.

I. What we understand by a divine revelation.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be assured of a divine revelation, or by what arguments a faith or persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this persuasion or assurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what sense it may be said to be a divine faith; under which I shall speak something concerning the testimony of the Spirit.

I. What we are to understand by a divine revelation. *Ans.* A supernatural discovery, or manifestation of things to us. I say supernatural, because it may either be immediately by God, or by the mediation of angels; as most, if not all the revelations of the Old Testament were; a supernatural discovery, or manifestation, either immediately to our minds, and inward faculties; (for I do not so well understand the distinction between *understanding* and *imagination*, as to be careful to take notice of it); or else mediately to our understandings, by the mediation of our outward senses, as by an external appearance to our bodily eyes, or by a voice and sound to the sense of hearing. But of this I have discoursed in a former sermon *, and therefore shall add no more here.

II. For the several kinds of divine revelation; of this also I have formerly † discoursed at large.

III. Whether a persuasion of a divine revelation may properly be called faith? To this I answer, that according to the straight and narrow notion of faith, which the schools have fixed, which is an assent to any thing grounded upon the testimony and authority of God revealing it, a persuasion of a divine revelation cannot properly be called faith; because it is irrational to expect that a man should have another divine revelation to assure him, that this is a divine revelation: for then,

* See sermon 127. † See ibid.

for the same reason, I must expect another divine revelation to assure me of that, and so without end. But I have sufficiently shewn, that this is not the true notion of faith in general, but only of a particular kind of faith; *viz.* that which is wrought by the argument, which we call testimony, or authority. But according to the true and general notion of faith, which is *a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing*, a persuasion of the mind concerning a divine revelation, may as properly be called faith, as any thing else, if men will but grant, that a man may be so satisfied, concerning a divine revelation, as verily to believe and be persuaded that it is so.

IV. How we may come to be persuaded of a divine revelation, that it is such; or by what arguments this persuasion is wrought in us? For answer to this, it will be requisite distinctly to consider,

First, The persons to whom a divine revelation is immediately made, what assurance they can have of it. And,

Secondly, What assurance other persons can have of it. I say, these are distinctly to be considered, because there is a very different account to be given of them.

First, As to those persons to whom the revelation is immediately made, the question is, By what arguments or means they come to be assured, that any revelation which they have, is really and truly such, and not a delusion or imposture? The Jewish doctors tell us, that some kind of divine revelations do not carry full assurance along with them, that they are divine; such are dreams and visions, as they are distinguished from prophecy: and as to that kind of revelation, which they strictly call prophecy, they give several characteristical notes to distinguish true divine revelation from delusion; such as these; that the spirit of delusion only works on the imagination, and the lower faculties; the divine spirit of prophecy upon the understanding and reasonable part of the soul: that delusive inspirations were accompanied with alienation of mind, which did discover itself either in rage and fury, or melancholy; but the true prophetical spirit is always consistent with the use of reason and understanding. They distinguish them likewise by the manner of their seizing

ing upon them; that in the beginning of inspirations the prophets used to have some apparition, or to hear some voice, either articulate in words, or inarticulate by thunder, or the sound of a trumpet, which in the Revelations doth frequently precede St John's visions; and by these they were assured that they were divine. And lastly, that a divine inspiration did always carry along with it a strong evidence of its original, and that, by the vigour and strength of its impression, they were fully assured and satisfied beyond all doubt and hesitation: thus they. But all that I shall say, by way of answer to this question, shall be in these two propositions.

1. If we believe any such thing as divine revelation, we cannot doubt but those who have it, are some way or other fully satisfied of it. The reason is evident; because otherwise it would be in vain, and to no purpose, and could not possibly attain its end. A divine revelation cannot possibly signify any thing, or in reason have any effect upon a man, unless he be satisfied it is such: for so long as he does not know but that it is a delusion, he will not attend to it, or regard it. So that the distinction of the Jewish doctors between dreams and visions, and prophecy, that this carries always full assurance with it, the other not, is vain and unreasonable.

2. The means whereby this assurance of a divine revelation is wrought, is most probably the evidence it carries along with it, whereby it did fully satisfy the person that had it of its divine original. That God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and overpowering light as shall discover to us the divinity of them, and satisfy us beyond all doubt and scruple, I think no man can doubt, that considers the vast power and influence which he must needs have over our understandings, who made them, and knows the frame of them: and if this be granted, it is not necessary to explain the particular way how it is done, it being a thing not to be expressed in words, but to be felt and experienced. So that the argument, whereby this persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in those that have it, is inward experience of the full satisfaction and assurance, which they find to be supernaturally wrought

in them, that is, of which they can give no accoun
from themselves. And this is not a stubborn belief, an
an obstinate conceit of a thing: but a good man, wh
is inspired, when he reflects upon himself, and this a
surance which he finds in himself, he can give a rationa
account of it to himself. Thus he finds that it is
foreign impression, and doth not spring from himsel
nor hath its rise from thence; therefore he ascribes it t
some spirit without himself; and he believes that the
is a God that can communicate himself to the minc
and spirits of men; and that his goodness is such, tha
he will not suffer them to be under a necessity of delusion
which they must be, if when they have the highest a
surance and satisfaction, that such a thing is a divine re
velation, they may be deceived. And then likewise h
considers the matter of the revelation, which if it d
not contradict any essential and necessary fundamenta
notion of his understanding, he thinks himself bound t
entertain it upon this assurance.

I say, good men may give themselves this rationa
satisfaction: for I grant a wicked man, that rejects an
disobeys the truth of God, may so provoke him, as
give him up to strong delusions, to believe lies; and h
may be as confident of a lie, as a good man is of truth. Bu
as this is not unjust from God in reference to the person
so it is no prejudice to the assurance which good men ma
have of divine revelation.

And this assurance is such, as it is not in the powe
of any evil spirit to convey to us, concerning a delu
sion; or if it be in his power, he is not permitted to d
it to any who have not highly provoked God, by re
jecting the truth, *to give them up to strong delusions, t*
believe lies: and that such persons should be obnoxious t
such delusions, as it is not unjust in reference to them
so neither is it any prejudice to the assurance which goo
men may have of such revelations, which are truly an
really divine.

But for the other ways of discerning true revelatio
from false, which the Jews mention; as that the Spi
of God always works upon the understanding, as we
as the imagination, and in consequence with the use o
reason and understanding, and gives some sensible no
tic

tice of its seizing upon men, I think all these to be uncertain, if they be examined. And if the last which they mention, *viz.* this that I have insisted upon, be true, all the other are superfluous. For what need any other sign to assure a man that that is a divine revelation which carries along with it a clear satisfaction and full assurance that it is such?

So that it remains now, that we fix upon some particular ways, whereby the person that hath a divine revelation, may be assured of it; and this I shall do by these propositions.

First, That God can work in the mind of man a firm persuasion of a thing, by giving him a clear and vigorous perception of it; and if so, then God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and overpowering light, as shall discover to us the divinity of them, and satisfy us thereof beyond all doubt and scruple. And this no man can doubt of, that considers the vast power and influence which God, who made the soul of man, and perfectly knows the frame of it, must needs have upon the mind and understanding of man.

Secondly, God never persuades a man of any thing that contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind and understanding. For this would be to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of a man, which, whilst it retains its own nature, and remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit. For instance, we cannot imagine that God can persuade any man that there is no God; for he that believes any thing as from God, must necessarily believe there is a God; therefore it is impossible that he can be persuaded of this as from God, that there is no God; and that he is not wise, and just, and good, and powerful; and that he is not to be honoured and loved by all reasonable creatures: because these do clearly and immediately contradict the most essential and fundamental notions of our minds concerning God, and the respect which is due to him: not only because it is unworthy of God to go about to persuade a man of a falsehood; but because it is impossible in the nature of the thing, that the mind of man, which is naturally

prepossessed

prepoſſeſſed with contrary notions, ſhould, whilſt it retains its own nature, admit of ſuch as do clearly and immediately contradict them. For if theſe be natural notions, that there is a God, that he muſt be wiſe, and juſt, and good, and powerful, and ought to be honoured and loved by his creatures; the mind of man cannot poſſibly admit of any contrary perſuaſions and impreſſions: for the former perſuaſions being natural to us, will always remain while our nature remains, and if any perſuaſions contrary to theſe could be wrought upon our minds, they would ſignify nothing, but would mutually deſtroy one another. For if any man that is perſuaded that God is good, (as every man is, that is perſuaded he is at all), could, during the perſuaſion, be likewiſe of a contrary perſuaſion, that he is not good; this latter perſuaſion would ſignify nothing: for he is not perſuaded that God is not good, whilſt he retains this perſuaſion that he is good.

Thirdly, Suppoſing the thing revealed do not contradict the eſſential notions of our minds, no good and holy man hath reaſon to doubt of any thing, whether it be a revelation from God or not, of which he hath a clear and vigorous perception, and full ſatisfaction in his own mind that it is ſuch. For if a man may have reaſon to doubt of any thing whereof he hath a clear perception, then no man can be certain of any thing. Now, that there is ſuch a thing as certainty, is now ſuppoſed, and not to be proved. I ſay, a good and holy man can have no reaſon to doubt: for a wicked man, I grant, may, by a ſinful rejection of, and diſobedience to the truth, ſo far provoke God, *as to give him up to ſtrong deluſions, to believe lies;* and he may be as confident of a lie, as any good man is of the truth.

And as this is not unjuſt from God, in reference to wicked men, ſo it is no prejudice to the aſſurance which good men may have concerning a divine revelation.

Fourthly, A good and holy man reflecting upon this aſſurance and perſuaſion that he hath, may be able to give himſelf a reaſonable account of it, and ſatisfy himſelf that it is not a ſtubborn belief, and an obſtinate conceit of things without any ground or reaſon. A good man is ſecretly, and within himſelf, perſuaded that

at God hath revealed to him such a thing: reflecting on this persuasion, he finds that it is a foreign impression, and doth not spring from his own mind. Now, believing that there is a God, who can, and probably doth communicate and reveal himself to the minds of good men; and being withal satisfied that his goodness is such, that he will not suffer good men, who do heartily and sincerely desire to know his will, to be under a necessity of delusion, (which they unavoidably are, if they may then be deceived, when they have the greatest assurance, and clearest satisfaction that such a thing is revealed to them of God); from hence he reasonably concludes, that he ought not to question the matter any further. I might instance in the revelation made to Abraham, concerning the sacrificing of his son, which hath the greatest difficulty in it of any case I know of: but of that I have elsewhere discoursed at large ‡. Thus much for the first.

Secondly, What assurance can other persons, who have not the revelation immediately made to them, have of a divine revelation? To this I shall answer by these propositions.

1. That there are some means whereby a man may be assured of another's revelation that it is divine. For, (1.) Otherwise it would signify nothing, but only to the person that immediately had it; which would make void the chief end of most revelations, which are seldom made to particular persons for their own sakes only, but for the most part, on purpose that they may be made known to others; which could not effectually be done, unless there be some means whereby men may be assured of revelations made to another.

(2.) None could be guilty of unbelief but those who had immediate revelation made to them. For no man is guilty of unbelief that is not obliged to believe: but no man can be under an obligation to believe any thing, who hath not sufficient means whereby he may be assured that such a thing is true.

2. The private assurance and satisfaction of another concerning a revelation made to him, can signify nothing at all to me, to assure me of it. For what satisfaction

‡ See Sermon 56.

faction is it to me, that another may say he hath a r
velation, unless I have some means to be assured th
what he says is true? For if I must believe every sp
rit, that is, every man that says he is inspired, I lie
pen to all possible impostures and delusions, and mu
believe every one that either foolishly conceits, or fall
ly pretends that he hath a revelation: for both the co
ceited and pretended enthusiast will say they have rev
lations, with as much confidence as those who are tru
and divinely inspired: and to take every man's wo
in matters of such huge consequence and importanc
as revelation from God ought to be presumed to b
would not be faith, but credulity, that is, an u
grounded persuasion; which how severely God punishe
you may see in that famous instance, 1 Kings xi
where the prophet that was sent to Bethel, is upon his r
turn torn in pieces by a lion, because of his credul
and easy belief of a pretended revelation. I conf
this case is somewhat different from theirs who simp
believe a pretended revelation, as being complicat
with some other aggravating circumstances. For
had an immediate revelation from God, *not to eat, n*
drink at Bethel, nor to return the same way that
came: upon his return, an old prophet meets him, a
tells him that an angel had appeared to him, and h
bid him bring him back, and to cause him to e
and drink; he believes him, and turns in with hi
Now, this was the aggravation of his credulity, th
when he himself had had an express revelation fro
God, concerning which he was satisfied, he hearken
to the pretended revelation of another, concerni
which he had no assurance, in contradiction to a divi
revelation, which he knew to be such. Not but th
the command which God had given him was, in
own nature, revocable, and God might have counte
manded it by another immediate revelation to him,
by an equivalent, that is, a miracle wrought by t
prophet, who pretended to countermand it from Go
Unumquodque dissolvitur eo modo quo ligatur; the oblig
tion which was brought upon him by an immediate r
velation, could not be dissolved but by another imm
diate revelation, or evidence equivalent to it. Ho
eve

er, this instance serves in the general to my purpose, at a man may be faulty by credulity, as well as by belief; and as a man ought not to disbelieve, where ere is sufficient evidence; so neither ought he to be-ve any thing without sufficient grounds of assurance.

3. That miracles wrought for the confirmation of ny divine testimony or revelation made to another, are sufficient means, whereby those who have not the di-ne revelation immediately made to them, may be as-red that it is divine; I say, these are sufficient means f assurance in this case. I do not say they are the on-means, (for it does not become men to limit the ower and wisdom of God); but I do not know of any ther means of assurance, upon which men can securely ely; and it is a great presumption that this is the best nd fittest, if not the only means, because the wisdom f God hath always pitched upon it, and constantly nade use of it, and no other. Under miracles I com-rehend the prediction of future events, which God laims as a peculiar prerogative to himself, because uch things are out of the reach of any created under-tanding; and therefore in the Prophet Isaiah, he chal-engeth the idols of the Heathens to give this testimony, r argument of their divinity; *Shew us things that are to ome, that we may know that ye are gods.*

But here we must distinguish between doubtful and unquestionable miracles. I call those doubtful miracles, which, though a man cannot tell how they can be done by any natural power, yet do not carry that full convic-tion with them, as to be universally owned and ac-knowledged for arguments of a divine power. Such were those which the magicians did by their inchantments. I call those unquestionable, which, considering their quality and number, and the public manner of doing them, are out of all question. Such were the miracles of Moses, and our Saviour. Now, a doubtful, and a single, and a private wonder, or miracle, as I may call it, can give no confirmation to any thing in opposition to a revelation, or a doctrine confirmed by many, and public, and unquestionable miracles. Upon this ac-count Moses forbids the children of Israel to hearken to any prophet that should come to seduce them to ido-latry;

latry; yea, though *he should give thee a sign or wonde and the sign or wonder should come to pass*, Deut. xiii. 1. 3. 4. Now, here lies the strength of the reason, *b cause he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord yo God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and r deemed you out of the house of bondage*; that is, becau he contradicts the great revelation which God made himself, and confirmed by such a succession of so man and so great miracles; the credit of which revelati ought not in reason to be called in question upon t working of a single and a private wonder, which w could not distinguish from a miracle. Upon the san account, St Paul, Gal. i. 8. says, *Though an ang from heaven should preach any other doctrine than th which had been preached unto them, he should be accu sed*; that is, after so clear and great confirmation, was given by the gospel, a contrary doctrine, though should come from an angel, should be rejected as ex crable.

But you will say, Suppose such a prophet as Mos speaks of here, such an angel as St Paul mentions, shou work as many and as great miracles as Moses and Chri wrought, should we then believe them?

I answer, This is not to be supposed: for supposin the providence of God in the world, it cannot be ima gined that an equal attestation should be given to a fal doctrine and a true. But that the greatest and mo unquestionable miracles are to carry it, is evident; be cause this is all the reason why Moses was to be credite above the magicians, because he wrought more an greater wonders than they did. But if it could be sup posed that any one could work as great miracles for th confirmation of idolatry, as were wrought by way c attestation to the true worship of God, then there woul be no difference, but what the reason of the thin makes; the belief of one God being more reasonabl than many; and not to make an image or sensible re presentation of a spirit, being more reasonable than t make one. But if this could be supposed, the natura issue and consequence of it would be atheism, a ma would believe neither that nor the other, nor that there is any God at all.

But a farther account of the nature and difference of miracles, I reserve to some ‡ particular discourses on that subject. At present, for the fuller opening of this matter, it will be proper to shew,

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moses and Christ is resolved into miracles.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe that testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What assurance they give us, that the scriptures are a divine revelation.

But the consideration of these I refer to the next opportunity.

SERMON CCXXII.

Of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The fourth sermon on this text.

IN discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation, I proposed the considering these seven things.

I. What we understand by a divine revelation.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be assured of a divine revelation; or by what arguments a faith or persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

‡ See sermons on Heb. ii. 4. in this volume.

V. The degrees of this perſuaſion or aſſurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what ſenſe it may be ſaid to be a divine faith.

I was upon the fourth of theſe, *viz.* conſidering by what arguments faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation is wrought in us; which led me to conſider the evidence of miracles; and I propoſed to ſhew particularly theſe three things.

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moſes and Chriſt is reſolved into miracles.

2. What aſſurance of miracles is ſufficient to perſuade men to believe that teſtimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What aſſurance they give us, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation.

I proceed to treat of theſe in their order.

1. I ſhall ſhew that the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moſes and of Chriſt is reſolved into miracles. We find the ſcripture lays the whole weight of the divine authority both of the law and goſpel, of the revelation of the Old and New Teſtament, upon this evidence. Exod. iv. 1. 2. 3. When God ſends Moſes he objects, *That they will not believe him, nor hearken to him, but will ſay, The Lord hath not appeared unto him.* Thereupon God gives him a power of miracles that they may believe *that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, hath appeared unto them:* and by the evidence of thoſe miracles which he wrought, he prevailed over the magicians. And generally throughout the ſtory of the Old Teſtament, we find all perſons yielding to the evidence of miracles, as a ſufficient atteſtation to a prophet and his meſſage. When Elijah had prevailed with God in a miraculous manner to confirm his own worſhip, and confute the worſhip of Baal, by ſending fire from heaven to conſume the ſacrifice, the people yield to this evidence, and cry out, *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God*, 1 Kings xviii. 39. When Elijah raiſed the woman's ſon, then ſhe owned him for a prophet, 1 Kings xvii. 24. *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.* So likewiſe Naaman was convinced by the miracu-

aculous cure which the Prophet Eliſha wrought on him, 2 Kings v. 15. *Behold! now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Iſrael.*

And ſo likewiſe the divinity of our Saviour and his doctrines is reſolved into the evidence of his miracles. This is the evidence Chriſt gives of himſelf, when John ſent his diſciples to inquire whether he was the Meſſias, Matth. xi. 2. &c. *Now when John had heard in the priſon the works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, Go and ſhew John again thoſe things which ye do hear and ſee: The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached unto them. And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.* So John v. 36. *But I have greater witneſs than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* Chap. x. 25. *Jeſus anſwered them, I told you, and ye believed it not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me.* Verſe 37. 38. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe the Father is in me, and I in him.* Chap. xiv. 11. *Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or elſe believe me for the very works ſake.* Chap. xx. 30. 31. *And many other ſigns truly did Jeſus in the preſence of his diſciples, which are not written in this book. But theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.* And from hence our Saviour aggravates the unbelief and impenitency of the Jews, becauſe they reſiſted this higheſt evidence, Matth. xi. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein moſt of his mighty works were done, becauſe they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethſaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes. But I ſay unto you, It ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of*

judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, ſhalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I ſay unto you, that it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. John xv. 24. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin; but now have they both ſeen, and hated both me and my Father.* And ſo the Apoſtle tells us, that miracles are the great confirmation of the goſpel, and are ſo clear an evidence of the truth of it, that they render all unbelievers inexcuſable: Heb. ii. 2. 3. *For if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompenſe of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?*

In particular, the great weight of the goſpel is laid upon the miracle of Chriſt's reſurrection from the dead, which our Saviour mentions as the only ſign that ſhould be given to that generation, that is, the cleareſt. And the Apoſtle, Rom. i. 4. ſaith, *that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.* This put it out of all queſtion. And St Paul, in his ſermon to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30. 31. inſiſts upon this as the great evidence: *And the times of their ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* And this was the proper work of the apoſtles, to be witneſſes to the world of this great miracle, Acts i. 21. 22. *Wherefore of theſe men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptiſm of John, unto that ſame day that he was taken up from us, muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his reſurrection.* So St Peter, in his ſermon, Acts ii. 32. *Him hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes.* And to mention no more, Acts x. 38. 39. 40. 41.

41. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe the revelation or testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought. Of this assurance there are three degrees, all which do oblige men to believe the divine revelation for which they are wrought.

(1.) If we have the evidence of our own senses for it, that is, if we see them wrought. This evidence the disciples of our Lord had, and the Jews, and therefore their unbelief was inexcusable; and the blaspheming the Spirit whereby they saw such miracles to be wrought, was the sin against the Holy Ghost.

(2.) If we have the credible report of eye-witnesses of those miracles, who are credible persons, and we have no reason to doubt of their testimony; that is, if we have the reports of them immediately from the mouth of those who were eye-witnesses of them. That this lays likewise an obligation on men to believe, appears by our Saviour's reproof of Thomas, who would not believe except he himself saw: but most expressly from that text, Mark xvi. 14. *He upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

(3.) If the credible report of eye-witnesses concerning such miracles be conveyed to us in such a manner, and with so much evidence, as we have no reason to doubt of it. For why should we not believe a credible report conveyed to us in such a manner, as we have no reason to question, but that it hath been faithfully conveyed and transmitted to us? St John thought this to be assurance sufficient to induce belief, John xx. 31. *But these things were written that ye might believe, &c.* And this is that assurance which we, who live at this

diſtance from the age of Chriſt and his apoſtles, hav of the miracles wrought in confirmation of the goſpe I ſhall have occaſion to enlarge upon theſe heads her after.

3. What aſſurance miracles give us, that the ſcrip tures are a divine revelation. And this contains fo diſtinct queſtions in it.

1. What aſſurance we have from hence, that th doctrine contained in the ſcripture is from God? T which the anſwer is eaſy; becauſe theſe miracles wer wrought for the confirmation of this doctrine.

2. The queſtion is, What aſſurance miracles give that thoſe perſons who are ſaid to be the penmen o the ſeveral books of ſcripture, were really ſo? To thi I anſwer, none at all: for I do not know of any miracl that was wrought to prove Moſes wrote the Penta teuch, or that St Matthew wrote the goſpel which goe under his name. But if the queſtion be, How then ar I aſſured of this? I anſwer, by credible and uncontrolle report. It bears his name, and hath always been re ceived for his; and if this will not ſatisfy, I canno prove it farther; it is too late now to prove it by an other argument. St Matthew is dead, and thoſe wh ſaw him write it, and thoſe who received it from them ſo that we cannot go to inquire of them in order to ou ſatisfaction: but the beſt of it is, that as it cannot now be proved at this diſtance otherwiſe than by conſtan uncontrolled report, ſo no man at this diſtance can hav any reaſon to doubt of it; and ſo long as no man ca have any reaſon to doubt of it, there can be no need o proving it, eſpecially conſidering that it is by no mean neceſſary to ſalvation, to believe that St Matthew wrot the hiſtory of the goſpel; but only to believe what h wrote.

3. The queſtion is, What aſſurance miracles give that thoſe perſons who are ſaid to be the penmen of the books of ſcripture were divinely inſpired? Th miracles (under which I comprehend the prediction o future events) which Moſes, and the prophets, and th apoſtles wrought, were teſtimonies from heaven, that they were divine perſons, and that what they ſaid wa to be credited; and conſequently if they gave out them-

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ves for such, that they were such. That the pen-
en of the New Testament were persons endowed with
miraculous power, is plain, because they were most
them apostles: and for the rest, we have no reason
doubt of it; those extraordinary gifts being so com-
on in the primitive times: however, so long as there
nothing in the rest, that is dissonant from, or contra-
to what those wrote, of whose inspirations we are as-
red, and these their writings have always been recei-
d in the church as of divine inspiration, which we
ay well presume was not rashly done, and without
ounds, we have no reason to doubt as to them: or
they were, so long as they contain nothing that is
ntrary to those who were unquestionably inspired,
e matter is of no dangerous consequence. And as
r the penmen of the Old Testament, we are assured
at they were all inspired, by one in the New Testa-
ent, that was unquestionably so, St Paul, who tells
, *that all scripture is of divine inspiration*, meaning
e books of the Old Testament which were called by
at name, κατ' ἐξοχὴν, or by way of eminency.

But if any one inquire farther, how far the penmen
f scripture were inspired in the writing of those books?
hether only so far as to be secured from mistake in the
elivery of any message or doctrine from God, or in the
elation of any history, or matter of fact; yet so, as
hey were left every man to his own style and manner
f expression? or that every thing they wrote, was im-
ediately dictated to them, and that not only the sense
f it, but the very words and phrases by which they
express things, and that they were merely instruments
r penmen, I shall not take upon me to determine; I
hall only say this in general, that considering the end of
his inspiration, which was to inform the world certain-
y of the mind and will of God, it is necessary for every
man to believe that the inspired penmen of scripture
were so far assisted as was necessary to this end: and
he that thinks upon good grounds that this end cannot
be secured, unless every word and syllable were im-
ediately dictated, he hath reason to believe it was
o; but if any man upon good grounds thinks the
nd of writing the scripture may be sufficiently secured
without

without that, he hath no reaſon to conclude, that God who is not wanting in what is neceſſary, is guilty of d ing what is ſuperfluous. And if any man is of opini that Moſes might write the hiſtory of thoſe actio which he himſelf did or was preſent at, without an i mediate revelation of them; or that Solomon by h natural and acquired wiſdom might ſpeak thoſe w ſayings which are in his Proverbs: or the evangeli might write what they heard and ſaw, or what th had good aſſurance of from others, as St Luke tells h did; or that St Paul might write for his cloak a parchments at Troas, and ſalute by name his frien and brethren, or that he might adviſe Timothy to dri a little wine, &c. without the immediate dictate of t Spirit of God, he ſeems to have reaſon on his ſide. F that men may, without an immediate revelation, wri thoſe things which they think without a revelatio ſeems very plain. And that they did ſo, there is th probable argument for it, becauſe we find that the e vangeliſts, in relating the diſcourſes of Chriſt, are ve far from agreeing in the particular expreſſions a words, though they do agree in the ſubſtance of the di courſes: but if the words had been dictated by the Sp rit of God, they muſt have agreed in them. For wh St Luke differs from St Matthew, in relating wh our Saviour ſaid, it is impoſſible that they ſhould bot relate it right as to the very words and form of expreſſio but they both relate the ſubſtance of what he ſaid. An if it had been of concernment, that every thing th they wrote ſhould be dictated *ad apicem*, to a tittle, b the Spirit of God, it is of the ſame concernment ſtil that the providence of God ſhould have ſecured th ſcripture ſince to a tittle from the leaſt alteration which that it is not done, appears by the various read ings both of the Old and New Teſtament, concernin which, no man can infallibly ſay, that this is right and not the other. It ſeems ſufficient in this matte to aſſert, that the Spirit of God did reveal to the pen men of the ſcriptures what was neceſſary to be reveal ed: and as to all other things, that he did ſuperinten them in the writing of it, ſo far as to ſecure them fro

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a material error or miſtake in what they have de-
ed. Or,

. If the queſtion be, what aſſurance we have from
acles, that all thoſe books which we receive are
nical? To this I anſwer, I do not know of any mi-
e that ever was wrought on purpoſe to confirm the
on of the ſcriptures: but as for the books of the Old
ament, we have ſufficient aſſurance, that thoſe
ch we now receive, are thoſe which the Jews recei-
for ſuch in our Saviour's time; and he doth not any
re find fault with any of them as not canonical,
ch we have no reaſon to doubt but he would have
e, if any one of them had been otherwiſe. And that
e are the ſame the Jews then received, appears ſuffici-
ly, becauſe both Jews and Chriſtians to this day a-
e in them. As for the books of the New Teſtament,
are ſufficiently aſſured, that theſe, and no other, are
books which the ancient church received for cano-
al and of divine authority; and though ſome of them
e for a time controverted, yet upon further inquiry
examination they were received.

V. Whether this faith concerning a divine revelation
de to others, do admit of degrees? That it doth,
vident from theſe expreſſions which the ſcripture u-
, of *increaſing faith*, of *growing in it*, of *a weak and
ng faith*, all which plainly ſuppoſe degrees. And that
ſe degrees of faith which the ſcripture ſpeaks of, are
be underſtood of a higher and lower degree of aſſurance
ncerning a divine revelation as ſuch, and concerning
: things revealed, I ſhewed before. For all the doubts
ich the diſciples had concerning what our Saviour
ght, did reſolve itſelf into this, Whether he was the
ſſias, and ſent by God to teach thoſe things; which
they been fully ſatisfied of, they could have made
doubt of any thing that he taught.

And here it will be proper to inquire, what is the
heſt degree of aſſurance which we can have concern-
a divine revelation made to another, that it is ſuch;
ether it be an infallible aſſurance, or only an un-
ubted certainty. The difference between them is
; an infallible aſſurance is ſuch as excludes all poſ-
ility of error and miſtake; an undoubted certainty
doth

doth not exclude all poſſibility of miſtake, but only
juſt and reaſonable cauſe why a prudent and conſide
man ſhould doubt. And the reaſon why I make this in
ry, is in order to be ſatisfied of a clear and firm way
the reſolution of our faith againſt the Papiſts, who f
is impoſſible for us to give any ſatisfactory account
our faith, becauſe we do finally reſolve it into fall
grounds, and conſequently our faith muſt be falli
and conſequently cannot be divine, becauſe all di
faith is infallible: for, ſay they, when we inquire w
you believe the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion;
ſay, upon divine authority, or the revelation of Go
ſcripture. This is granted to be an infallible groun
we can be infallibly aſſured that the ſcriptures are a
vine revelation; therefore they inquire in the ſec
place, Why do you believe the ſcriptures to be a
vine revelation? we ſay, becauſe the perſons who c
vered the doctrines contained in them, had the grea
atteſtation from God, that they were employed by h
to reveal and make known his mind; and this atte
tion was miracles. But then they aſk, What aſſura
have you that ſuch miracles were wrought? Have yo
infallible aſſurance, or not? If not, then it cannot b
ſufficient ground for a divine faith, which is always
fallible. In oppoſition therefore to them, I ſhall not r
attempt to ſhew the inſufficiency of their way of re
ving faith; but vindicate ours as ſufficient, by lay
down and proving, if I can, theſe propoſitions.

1. That infallibility is not eſſential to divine fa
and neceſſarily included in the notion of it; whi
prove thus. Divine faith admits of degrees, as I h
ſhewed before: but there can be no degrees of infal
lity. Infallibility is an impoſſibility of being deceiv
but there are no degrees of impoſſibility, one thin
not more impoſſible than another; but all things t
are impoſſible, are equally ſo.

2. That the aſſurance which we have of the mira
wrought for the confirmation of the goſpel, is not in
lible aſſurance. I ſhewed before that there are th
ways whereby we may be aſſured of matter of fact, l
as the working of miracles is.

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irſt, By our own ſenſes.

econdly, By the report of credible witneſſes.

hirdly, By credible hiſtory. But none of theſe ys give us infallible aſſurance. That it is poſſible our ſenſes may deceive us, I think no body will deny; and if ſo, then the teſtimony of witneſſes, and the report of hiſtory, which likewiſe depends originally upon our ſenſes, may deceive us. I do not know a fourth way whereby we may be aſſured of matter of fact.

3. That an undoubted aſſurance of a divine revelation, that it is ſuch, is as much as in reaſon can be expected. I deny not but that a divine revelation is an infallible ground of faith; becauſe whatever God ſays is infallibly true, and a faith built upon a divine revelation would be infallible, if we could be infallibly aſſured that it is a divine revelation; but that we cannot be without another divine revelation to aſſure us infallibly that this is one, and that other would require a third, and ſo without end; which being abſurd and unreaſonable, it remains that an infallible aſſurance of a divine revelation is impoſſible; and conſequently, that we can have no more than an undoubted aſſurance; and this is as much as in reaſon we can expect to have: for it is unreaſonable to expect that we ſhould have any greater aſſurance that ſuch a revelation is from God, than we have that there is a God; becauſe that there is a God, is the firſt and moſt fundamental principle of religion, and it is unreaſonable to expect greater aſſurance of any thing in religion, than we have of that which is the firſt principle of it. And indeed it is impoſſible; for no man can be infallibly aſſured, that a revelation is from God, unleſs he be firſt infallibly aſſured that there is a God, but no man hath more than undoubted aſſurance that there is a God. No man pretends to a divine revelation that there is a God; but only to have rational ſatisfaction of it, ſuch as leaves no juſt or reaſonable cauſe to doubt of it. And why then ſhould any deſire greater aſſurance of a divine revelation, than he hath of God?

4. An undoubted aſſurance is ſufficient to conſtitute a *divine faith*. Mark xvi. 14. it is ſaid, *Chriſt upbraided his diſciples with their unbelief, becauſe they believed not*

not them who had ſeen him after he was riſen. Suppo
now the diſciples had believed, which they ought
have done, this faith of theirs would have been a tru
divine faith; but by no means infallible. For th
cannot be an infallible faith which is built but upo
fallible grounds: now, the ground upon which th
ought to have believed, was the report of credible wi
neſſes; but the report of credible witneſſes is by n
means infallible; it is indeed undoubted, for I have n
reaſon to doubt of a credible report; for that is cr
dible which I have juſt cauſe to believe; but I can ha
no juſt cauſe to doubt of that which I have juſt cauſe t
believe.

As an undoubted aſſurance is ſufficient to conſtitute
divine faith, ſo it is ſufficient to all the ends and pu
poſes of a divine faith. To inſtance in the faith of th
promiſes of eternal life: What is the end and deſig
of this faith, but to encourage our obedience, and mak
us continue in it, notwithſtanding the hazard of an
thing in this world? Now, I ſay, an undoubted aſſu
rance is abundantly ſufficient to this end. Do not me
venture their eſtates in traffic to places they never ſaw
becauſe they have it from credible perſons, that ther
are ſuch places; and they have no reaſon to doub
their teſtimony: and why ſhould not the ſame aſſu
rance ſerve us in greater matters? If an undoubted aſ
ſurance of a leſſer benefit and advantage will make me
venture as much, why ſhould any man deſire greate
aſſurance of any thing, than to have no juſt reaſon to
doubt of it; why more than ſo much as the thing i
capable of? I cannot poſſibly underſtand why every
man ſhould not be contented with ſufficient aſſurance,
or for what reaſon a man ſhould deſire more than e-
nough; and why a man ſhould not be ſatisfied that a
thing is ſo, when he hath as great aſſurance of it, and
as good evidence for it as he could have, ſuppoſing it
were.

And for men to ſay, nothing leſs than infallible aſ-
ſurance can ſatisfy a man's mind, that men will always
doubt ſo long as there is a poſſibility of the contrary;
and there will be a poſſibility of the contrary, until
we have infallible aſſurance, is as unreaſonable as

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can be imagined. I ask any man, whether he be infallibly assured that there was such a man as William the Conqueror? or that there is such a country as Spain? If he say he is, I ask, where is his infallible evidence for this? He will cite several historians: but all this is human testimony, and that is fallible. It seems then he is not infallibly certain there was such a man, or there is such a country; and consequently there is a possibility of the contrary. It is granted there is; but is any sober man unsatisfied in his mind about these things? I would fain meet with the man that will tell me in good earnest, that he hath reason to doubt, whether there was such a man, or not; and whether there be such a place as Spain, or not. So that it is fond for any man to alledge a bare possibility of the contrary, as a reasonable cause of doubting concerning any thing, for which we have as good evidence as the thing is capable of.

Upon these grounds we can easily resolve our faith. We believe the doctrine of Christian religion, because it is revealed by God; we believe it to be revealed by God, because it was confirmed by unquestionable miracles: we believe such miracles were wrought, because we have as great assurance of this, as any matter of fact, at such a distance from the time it was done, is capable of. Now, if the Papists say, this doth at least amount to no more than moral assurance; I grant it doth not: but then I have proved this assurance to be as much as in reason can be expected, and as much as is sufficient to the nature and ends of a divine faith, and that an infallible assurance is not agreeable to a human understanding; but an incommunicable attribute and prerogative of the divine nature, which whoever pretends to, he hath not the modesty of a creature, but does by a sacrilegious ambition attempt the throne of God, and equal himself to the Most High. And therefore it is no wonder that the popes of Rome, after they had once assumed to themselves to be infallible, did presently arrogate to themselves the titles of God, there being such strict connection between the attribute of infallibility and the divine nature, that whoever challengeth the first, may with equal reason claim the other.

I ſhall only add this, that nothing hath been mo pernicious to Chriſtian religion, than the vain pretenc of men to greater aſſurance concerning things relatin to it, than they can make good; the miſchief of whic is this; that when diſcerning and inquiſitive men fin that men pretend to greater matters than any can prov this makes them doubt of all they ſay, and to call i queſtion the truth of Chriſtianity itſelf. Whereas, men would be contented to ſpeak juſtly of things, an pretend to no greater aſſurance than they can brin evidence for; conſiderate men would be apt to believ them. Every knowing man being more ready to liſte to a modeſt man, whoſe confidence bears a proportio to the reaſons and arguments he brings for what he ſay than to a confident pretender, who calls every wea ſaying a demonſtration. And indeed ſuch men are bu juſtly dealt withal, ſince the experience of the worl hath ſufficiently taught us, that uſually thoſe who ſpea modeſtly of things, are furniſhed with the beſt argument for their aſſertions; and that thoſe who have made th ſtrongeſt pretences to infallibility in any thing, hav the weakeſt reaſons for what they have ſaid; of whic this account may be given, that good reaſons and argu ments are requiſite to beget in a man a rational aſſu rance; but a ſtrong conceit is ſufficient to beget in men a opinion of infallibility.

VI. What is the proper and genuine effect of this fait of a divine revelation? I anſwer, a compliance wit the deſign and intention of it.

VII. In what reſpect this may be called a divin faith? To this I anſwer; not only in reſpect of the ob ject of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought and the effect of it; but likewiſe in reſpect of the autho and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. An here, if time would permit, I ſhould ſpeak of the teſti mony of the Spirit; not as an argument whereby a per ſuaſion of a divine revelation, *viz.* that the ſcripture are the word of God, is wrought: but alſo as he is th author and efficient cauſe of it. I do moſt readily gran the great influence that the Spirit of God hath upon th minds of men in this work of faith, as well as in ever ſpiritual act: but it is to be inquired, how the Spirit o

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God may be said to work this faith in us; whether by strengthening the faculty; or by holding the mind intent upon the argument, whereby this persuasion is wrought; or discovering the object; or removing the impediments; or furthering and helping forward the efficacy of it upon our hearts and lives. But of this, God willing, in my next discourse.

SERMON CCXXIII.

Of the testimony of the Spirit, to the truth of the gospel.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The fifth sermon on this text.

IN discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation, I came to inquire, in what respects this may be called a divine faith. To which my answer was, that it is a divine faith, not only with respect to the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it; but likewise in respect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. I proceed therefore to consider the testimony of the divine Spirit, not only as an argument whereby a persuasion of a divine revelation, *viz.* That the scriptures are the word of God, is wrought; but also as he is the author and efficient cause of it. The scripture doth in a peculiar manner ascribe the belief of a divine revelation, especially of the revelation of the gospel, to the Spirit of God. In this sense the scripture saith, *That no man can say, that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Spirit of God.* And though every good persuasion that we have, be in some sort or other to be ascribed to

God, yet I obſerve it to be the phraſe of the New Teſtament, to attribute the belief of the goſpel, in a more peculiar manner, to the Spirit of God. When any man believes the principles of natural religion, that there is a God, that the ſoul is immortal, and that there are rewards after this life, as the Heathens did; even this is from God, who hath planted theſe principles in our natures; or, which comes all to one, hath given us ſuch faculties, by the uſe and improvement of which, we may come to the knowledge of theſe principles: but it is not uſual, in the phraſe of ſcripture, to attribute this natural knowledge in ſuch a peculiar manner to the Spirit of God.

When any man believes the matters of divine revelation, for inſtance, the doctrines contained in the goſpel; this faith is to be attributed to the Spirit of God; but not as immediately perſuading us of the truth of theſe doctrines, but by perſuading us, that the goſpel which contains theſe truths, is a divine revelation; or, which is all one, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who delivered theſe doctrines to the world, was a divine perſon, and came from God: and if we once firmly believe and entertain this, that Jeſus was the Meſſias, and ſent from God to acquaint the world with his mind and will; we can make no doubt of the truth of any thing which he hath delivered. So that the faith which the ſcripture doth in a peculiar manner attribute to the Spirit of God, is this perſuaſion, *that Jeſus is the Chriſt*; that is, that he was the true Meſſias, and ſent from God.

So that the queſtion is, how the Spirit of God doth concur to the begetting of this faith or perſuaſion? Or, by this faith is in ſuch a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God?

I anſwer, upon theſe two accounts.

Firſt, In reſpect of the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to perſuade us to believe.

Secondly, In reſpect of the inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men in believing.

Firſt, In reſpect to the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to perſuade us to believe. And if this be not that which divines mean by the teſtimony

ly of the Spirit in this matter, yet, I think, it is that which may most properly be so called. Now, the Spirit of God did outwardly testify concerning Jesus, that he was the Messias, and came from God; and that the doctrine which he taught was divine.

1. In the voice from heaven, which accompanied the descending of the Spirit upon him, in the form of a dove, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. iii. 17.

2. In those miracles which Christ himself wrought by the Spirit of God; which were so eminent a testimony of the Spirit of God, that the resisting of the evidence of those miracles, and the attributing of them to the devil, is by our Saviour called a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and such a sin as shall never be pardoned: because miracles being the highest attestation that can be given to the divinity of any person, or his doctrine: whoever resists this evidence, resists his last remedy; and such a person must needs remain in his infidelity, because there is nothing more that can be done for his conviction.

3. The third eminent testimony which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ, was in the great miracle of his resurrection from the dead; and hence it is that the great miracle of Christ's resurrection, which was the highest attestation to the divinity of his person, and the grand confirmation to his doctrine, is frequently in scripture, in a most peculiar manner, ascribed to the Spirit of God, Rom. i. 4. *And was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness*, that is, by those miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and by his resurrection from the dead. And so, Rom. viii. 11. *The Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Being put to death in the flesh; but quickened by the Spirit.*

4. In the effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles who were to preach Christ and his doctrine to the world: and that it might carry its evidence along with it, God poured forth his Spirit upon those who were to be the publishers of it; by which Spirit they were endowed with several miraculous powers and gifts, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine which they preached.

And with relation to this, I think, it is that the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 Cor. ii. 4. 5. *And my ſpeech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom: but in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God;* that is, they did not uſe human eloquence to perſuade men, but delivered the goſpel with all plainneſs: and that which made thoſe plain diſcourſes ſo powerful, were thoſe powerful demonſtrations of the divine Spirit, which appeared in thoſe miraculous gifts wherewith they were endowed. I am ſure Origen underſtands this text ſo. And ſo likewiſe the Apoſtle, 1 Theſſ. i. 5. ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, that *the goſpel came not unto you in word only; but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance;* that is, they did not only ſpeak words to men, but the doctrine which they preached was atteſted in a powerful manner by the Holy Ghoſt, in thoſe extraordinary gifts, which were beſtowed upon them, which was a great evidence to their hearers, and gave them great aſſurance of the truth of what they delivered. I think this is the meaning of thoſe two places, but I will mention two others which are more unqueſtionable, Acts v. 32. where Peter, and the reſt of the apoſtles, tell the high prieſts and their officers, what evidence they had for what they preached concerning the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Chriſt. *We are his witneſſes of theſe things; and ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Not only they themſelves had ſeen what they preached; but to confirm their teſtimony, the Holy Ghoſt was poured forth upon them in miraculous gifts. And Heb. ii. 3. 4. *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will?* So the Holy Ghoſt gave teſtimony to the truth of the doctrine which the Apoſtles preached, by thoſe gifts which he endowed them withal, and thoſe miracles which he enabled them to work.

And I [illegible]ght not but with relation to the teſtimony which the Spirit of God gave to Chriſt by the miracles he

e wrought by Christ and his Apostles, I say, I doubt ot, but that with relation to his testimony it is, that ie Apostle saith, he was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. i. 16. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit:* that is, the miraculous power of the Spirit which appeared in him, nd did accompany his doctrine, did justify him to the orld, and vindicate him from being an impostor and eceiver.

From all which it appears, that the testimony which he Holy Spirit gives to Christ and his doctrine, was the niracles which he and his apostles wrought by the Spirit of God: and if we will take our forms of speaking rom scripture, this is that which may most properly e called the testimony of the Spirit to the truth of the gospel. But I deny not but besides this outward evidence, which the Spirit of God gives to the truth of the gospel, with respect to which the faith of the gospel is in peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God, there s likewise an inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men. Therefore,

Secondly, Faith is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God, in respect of the inward efficacy and operation of the divine Spirit upon the hearts and minds of those who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; I say, who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; that is, who so believe and entertain the gospel as to obey it, and comply with it in their hearts and lives. For I doubt not but that there is so much evidence for the truth and divine authority of the gospel, as is in itself sufficient, without any peculiar operation of the Spirit of God, to silence all opposers, and to convince them so far as that they cannot have any sufficient reason to disbelieve it: but withal, I do not think that this faith doth become an abiding and effectual persuasion in any person, without the special operation of the Holy Ghost. Now, that the Spirit of God can work this effectual persuasion in the mind of man, cannot be doubted by any man who considers the vast power and influence which the Spirit of God, who made our souls, and knows the frame of them, can have upon the mind of man: all

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the difficulty is about the manner of it; how this fait is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Now, althoug it were ſufficient for us to know the thing, though w were ignorant of the manner how it is done, and w might very well reſt ſatisfied in this, that the Spirit o God works this faith in us, though we did not kno how he does it; yet becauſe many have taken upo them to ſtate and determine the particular manner hov it is done, it will be requiſite, in order to the rectifyin ſome miſtakes about it, to inquire more particularly in to this matter.

Now, all the ways that have been aſſigned, or which I think, we can eaſily imagine, may be reduced to on of theſe ſix heads. When we ſay the Spirit of Go works faith in us, we muſt conceive it to be done ſom or all of theſe ways.

1. By ſtrengthening the faculty, that is, raiſing an enabling our underſtanding to yield aſſent to the go ſpel. Or,

2. By enlightening and diſcovering the object, tha is, the concluſion to be believed.

3. By propounding to us the arguments, or evidence whereby we may be perſuaded of it. Or,

4. By holding our minds intent upon this evidence till it have wrought its effect upon us. Or,

5. By removing the impediments which hinder ou aſſent. Or,

6. By furthering and helping forward the efficacy o this perſuaſion upon our hearts and lives.

That the Spirit can work faith in us, any, or all o theſe ways, ſo far as they are conſiſtent with one ano- ther, I make not the leaſt doubt. For what man, who believes the infinite power of the divine Spirit, can make the leaſt queſtion, whether it can raiſe and height- en our faculties above their natural and ordinary pitch? or whether it can diſcover an object to us, with the greateſt clearneſs and ſatisfaction? or whether it can offer to our minds the beſt arguments, and the higheſt evidence that a thing is capable of? or whether it can hold our minds intent upon the conſideration of any thing; or whether it can remove all hinderances and im- pediments?

liments? or whether it can make the persuasion of y truth effectual? No man in reason can doubt of the ssibility of these. But the question is, what reason we ve to assert this or that particular manner? and what cessity and convenience there is from experience, or dence of scripture, so to do?

First of all, there seems no necessity of asserting the t; though I will not contend with any man that ll. For if this be true, that our understandings are turally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to y truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; then ere can be no necessity to assert, that the Spirit of od doth, in the work of faith, raise and elevate our derstandings above their natural pitch. But, I think, may easily be proved, that our understandings are turally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to y truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; and at, in such a case, nothing hinders the assent of men, t their own perverseness and obstinacy, which usual- proceeds from opposition of their lusts, or passions, interest, to the truth which is propounded to them. or if mens understandings be not naturally endowed ith a sufficient power to yield assent to the gospel, hen it is sufficiently propounded to them, how can it mens duty to believe it? or what justice can condemn em for unbelief? But though there be no necessity of serting, that God doth always strengthen and elevate e understanding of those who believe; yet there is reason to deny but that God may do this when he leaseth, and possibly he often doth it.

God is said, in scripture, *to enlighten the eyes of our derstandings*, which we may, if we please, understand this sense; although that may be done by propound- g such truths to us as we were ignorant of before, nd could not have discovered, unless they had been re- ealed.

Secondly, The second way whereby the Spirit of God nay be conceived to work faith in us, is by enlighten- ng and discovering the object, or thing to be believed. n the case we are speaking of, the object or thing to e believed, is the gospel: now, we may imagine the Spirit of God may work a faith or persuasion of this in- us,

us, by revealing or diſcovering to us this propoſitio
That the goſpel is true. But this I need not ſpeak mu
to, becauſe I do not know any that pretend to have
particular and immediate revelation from God, that t
goſpel is true. So that though God may do this wh
he pleaſeth, yet I do not know any who aſſert this to
the way whereby faith is wrought in men.

Thirdly, The Spirit of God may be conceived
work faith in us, by propounding and offering to
ſuch arguments and evidence as are apt to perſua
us of the truth of the goſpel. And this the Spirit
God, which inſpired the writers of the ſcripture, do
mediately by the ſcriptures, and thoſe characters of d
vinity which are in the doctrines contained in them
and by thoſe miracles, which are there credibly relate
to be wrought by the Spirit of God, for the confirmatio
of that doctrine. And beſides this, the Spirit of Go
may, when he pleaſeth, and probably often doth, im
mediately ſuggeſt thoſe arguments to our minds, an
bring them to our remembrance.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God may be conceived t
work faith in us, by holding our minds intent upon th
evidence, till it hath wrought its effect upon us. An
this, I do not doubt, but the Spirit of God, out of h
abundant grace and goodneſs to men, often doth; and
I believe, many men have found their minds kept in
tent upon ſuch conſiderations, as have mightily pre
vailed upon them, and been effectual to perſuade ther
to entertain and obey the goſpel; and muſt acknow
ledge that their minds were awakened by ſuch conſide
rations, and made attentive to them, beyond their ow
inclinations to think upon ſuch things; and in ſuch
ſtrange and unaccountable manner, as they cannot i
reaſon but attribute to ſome ſuperior influence, *viz.* t
the Holy Spirit of God.

Fifthly, By removing the impediments which hinde
our effectual aſſent to the goſpel. And in this, and the
laſt particular, I conceive the work of the Spirit o
God in the producing of faith, principally to conſiſt:
I ſay in theſe principally, not abſolutely excluding th
former. The great impediment to the belief and enter-
tainment of the goſpel, is the prejudice which the minds
of

men are apt to conceive against it, either upon account of their education in a contrary religion, or upon account of their lusts, or some worldly interest, to which the gospel is opposite. Now, these are so many bars upon the understandings of men, to keep out the truth from entering into them. The prejudice of a contrary education is a monstrous obstacle to religion. When men have believed otherwise from their youth, and have had contrary principles implanted in them in their tender years, and have all their lives been possessed with contrary apprehensions of things; the clearest truths that can be offered to them, come upon infinite disadvantage; their understandings are tinctured, and put false colours upon every thing that is represented to them. And this was the case of the Jews, when the Messias came: they were possessed with prejudices against his mean appearance, and had fashioned to themselves another kind of Messias, that should be a glorious temporal prince; and had been brought up in this apprehension; and this made them so invincibly obstinate against the reception of him, though the whole nation, when he came, were in expectation of him. And this was also the case of the Gentiles, when the gospel was first preached to them: they had been educated in a contrary religion, and were possessed with quite other apprehensions, which made the passage of the gospel infinitely difficult. And I doubt not, but that in the first publishing of the gospel, the Spirit did remarkably work upon the minds of men, for the removing of these prejudices, and thereby making way for the entertainment of the gospel. And though this prejudice be not now upon us in these parts of the world, who are brought up in the Christian religion; yet the lusts and interests of men are now great obstacles to the effectual entertainment of the gospel; and the Spirit of God doth many times eminently appear in the restraining and conquering the lusts of men, and removing those other prejudices which hinder them from embracing the truth.

Sixthly, The last way whereby the Spirit of God may be said to work in us an effectual belief of the gospel, is by furthering and helping forward the efficacy of

of this perſuaſion upon our hearts and lives, in the fi
work of converſion and regeneration, and in the pr
greſſive work of ſanctification afterward, both wh
the ſcripture doth every where attribute to the Spi
of God, as the author and efficient cauſe. The fai
which *purifies the heart*, and *conquers the world*, a
works by love, hath this effect from the Spirit of Go
Hence we are ſaid to be *ſanctified by the renewing of t
Holy Ghoſt, and the belief of the truth*, and *to be kept
the mighty power of God, through faith unto ſalvation.*

Thus I have ſhewn you, as briefly and clearly as
could, how the Spirit of God doth concur to the bege
ting of this divine faith and perſuaſion in us, and co
ſequently in what reſpects faith may be ſaid to be t
gift of God. I ſhall only draw two or three inferenc
from this diſcourſe.

I. We may learn from hence to attribute all t
good that is in us, or that we do in any kind, to Go
Every good thing is from God; ſo St James tells u
that *every good and perfect work comes down even fro
the Father of lights.* Much more are we to aſcribe t
the free grace of God all the revelation of ſupernatur
truth, which we cannot poſſibly come to the knowledg
of, unleſs God, of his free grace and goodneſs, be plea
ſed to diſcover it to us. And ſo likewiſe are we t
aſcribe to God, and the operation of his Holy Spirit up
on our hearts, our belief of thoſe truths, and aſſent t
them. Conſidering the corruption and degeneracy c
human nature, and the oppoſition of the luſts and pre
judices of men to divine truth, we ſtand in need of th
grace of God, and the operation of his Spirit upon ou
hearts, to bring us to a firm aſſent to the goſpel; for a
fleſh and blood could not reveal theſe truths to us, ſ
neither is it very apt to aſſent to them when they ar
revealed.

In the phraſe of ſcripture, all good is attributed t
God; and all ſpiritual good to the Holy Spirit of Go
working in us, and aſſiſting us to the doing of it. As,
on the other hand, the ſcripture attributes all thoſe ſin
that are committed in the world, to the influence o
evil ſpirits. *He that committeth ſin, is of the devil.*
And though we do not know many times, how the Spi-

rit

r of God worketh a good inclination in us, yet it is
: to follow the phrase of scripture, and to ascribe all
od to God, as in some way or other the author of it.

II. This doth not excuse the infidelity of men, that
ith is the gift of God. For though no man doth be-
ve without some influence of the divine Spirit upon
heart, yet this does by no means excuse those who
lieve not, any more than it is an excuse to the infi-
ity of men, that the scripture attributes it to the
il, as in some sort the cause of it. He is said *to blind*
eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the
rious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. But the
belief of men is a fault for all this; because the devil
not blind our minds, unless we consent to it: he can
dly suggest false principles to us; but we may chuse
ether we will entertain them or not: he can only
mpt us to reject the truth; but we may chuse whether
will do so or not. In this we are faulty, because we
y resist the devil, and quench or repel those fiery
rts which he casts into our minds: but if we will
nsent to his temptations, and suffer ourselves to be
luded by him, the fault of our unbelief is our own,
well as his; and we are guilty of the infidelity which
suffer him to tempt us to.

So, on the other hand, though faith be the gift of
od; yet those that believe not are faulty upon this ac-
unt, that they quench and resist the blessed motions
God's Spirit, and the influence and operation of the
irit of God, which accompany the truth of the gospel
the minds of men, and produce their effect where-
er they are not opposed and rejected by the prejudice
d perverseness of men.

III. Let us depend upon God for every good gift;
d earnestly beg the assistance and influence of his
ly Spirit, which is so necessary to us to beget faith
us, and to preserve and to make it effectual upon
r hearts and lives. Bread is not more necessary to
e support of our natural life, than the Holy Spirit of
od to our spiritual life.

For our encouragement to ask this gift of God's Holy
irit, our Saviour hath told us, that God is very ready
bestow him upon us. No father upon earth is more

ready to give bread to his children that cry after hi
than God is to give his Spirit to those that heartily a
earnestly beg it of him. So our Saviour assures us, Lu
xi. 11. 12. 13. *If a son shall ask bread of any of y*
that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask
fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he sh
ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye the
being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your childre
how much more shall your heavenly Father give the H
Spirit to them that ask him?

And now I have done with the first thing that I pr
pounded, which was to open the nature of faith to y
in general. I have been the longer upon this, becau
I thought it very material, and important to the se
tling of right apprehensions in us concerning religio
and divine things; and I have all along endeavour
to make things as easy and plain as the nature of t
subject would permit. And though probably ma
things that I have said, might not be within the fi
reach and comprehension of all capacities, yet becau
I hoped they might be useful and beneficial to some
least, I could not think the other consideration a suf
cient reason why I should wholly omit them, and p
them by; remembering what St Paul says, that *he u*
a debtor to the wise, as well as the unwise. And St Pe
tells us, that St Paul in his epistles wrote *many thin*
which were hard to be understood by some persons; y
because those things might be of use to others, the Spi
of God did not think fit to omit the writing of the
What remains I shall reserve for another discourse, wi
which I shall conclude this subject.

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SERMON CCXXIV.

The efficacy, usefulness, and reasonableness of divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The sixth sermon on this text.

IN discoursing on these words, I have dispatched the first thing which I proposed, *viz.* to give an account of the notion and nature of faith in general; under which I have largely treated of a religious or divine faith in particular.

The second thing which I proposed, and to which I now proceed, is to confirm the truth of the proposition which I laid down from the words, *viz.* That faith is the great principle of religion. I told you that these words, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, do not only imply that faith is a necessary condition, without which men cannot be religious; but likewise that it is a cause and principle of religion. Without faith a man cannot be religious: and where there is true faith, it will have this effect upon men to make them religious. Therefore I shall distinctly speak to these two things.

First, That without faith there can be no religion.

Secondly, That where there is a true faith, it will have this influence upon men to make them religious.

First, That without faith there can be no religion. And this will appear by inquiring into the nature of all human actions, whether civil or religious; and this is common to both of them, that they suppose some kind of faith or persuasion. All human actions have an order and reference to some end, and consequently sup-

poſe ſome knowledge of the end, and of the means whe by it may be attained. So that unleſs a man do l lieve and be perſuaded that ſuch a thing is ſome way other good for him, and conſequently deſirable a fit to be propounded as an end, and that this end is tainable, and the means which he uſeth are probal and likely for the attaining of this end, he will ſit ſt and do nothing at all about it. So that without faith is impoſſible to do any thing: he that believes nothin will do nothing.

To inſtance firſt in civil actions, and the comm affairs and concernments of life: All theſe are done b virtue of ſome faith or perſuaſion concerning them For example, huſbandry, or merchandiſe; no ma will apply himſelf to theſe but upon ſome belief or pe ſuaſion of the poſſibility and neceſſity, or at leaſt uſ fulneſs and convenience of theſe to the ends of life. N man would plough or ſow if he did not believe tha there were ſuch a thing as the growing of corn, an that it is neceſſary for the ſupport of our lives, and i he were not perſuaded of the probability of reapin ſome fruit and benefit of his pains and induſtry. N man would traffic to Turky or the Indies, if he di not believe there were ſuch places, and that they afford ed ſuch commodities, and that he might have them upon ſuch terms as might recompenſe the adventure o his charge and pains. And ſo in all other actions of life.

So it is in divine and religious things; nothing is done without faith. No man will worſhip God unleſs he believe there is a God; unleſs he be perſuaded there is ſuch a being, which, by reaſon of its excellency and perfection, may challenge our veneration; and unleſs he believe the goodneſs of this God, that *he will reward thoſe that diligently ſerve him.* For all acts of religion being reaſonable, they ſuppoſe at leaſt an object and an end; that there is a God to be worſhipped, and that it is not in vain to ſerve him. This faith is neceſſary to natural religion. And in caſe God do diſcover and reveal his will to men, no man can obey the will of God unleſs he be perſuaded that God hath ſome way or other made known his will; and be perſuaded likewiſe

to the particular instance wherein his obedience is required, that this is God's will. For instance, no man will obey the precepts of the Bible, as divine laws and commands, unless he be persuaded that the doctrine contained in the holy scriptures is a divine revelation. So likewise no man can entertain Christ as the Messias and Saviour of the world, and yield obedience to his laws, unless he believes that he was *sent of God*, and *ordained by him to be a Prince and a Saviour*. So that you see the necessity of faith to religion.

Secondly, I shall shew the influence that a divine faith hath upon men to make them religious. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of the reasonableness and necessity of being religious; that it is reasonable for every man to be so, and that it is necessary to his interest. Now, there needs no more to be done to put a man upon any thing, but to satisfy him of these two things; that the action you persuade him to is reasonable; that is, possible and fit to be done; and that it is highly his interest to do it: that is, if he do it, it will be eminently for his advantage; if he do not do it, it will be eminently to his prejudice, and he is a lost and undone man. If you can once possess a man, that is in any degree sober and considerate, with these persuasions, you may make him do any thing of which he is thus persuaded. Now, a true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of all this.

1. Of the reasonableness of religion. He that verily believes there is a God, believes there is a being that hath all excellency and perfection, that is infinitely good, and wise, and just, and powerful; that made and preserves all things. Now, he that believes such a being as this, cannot but think it reasonable that he should be esteemed, and honoured, and adored by all those creatures that are sensible and apprehensive of these excellencies; that seeing he is infinitely good, and the fountain of all being, and all the blessings we enjoy, we should love so great a benefactor, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness to us; not only by constant praise of him, but by an universal obedience to his will, and a chearful submission to his pleasure. For what more reasonable than gratitude? that seeing he

is infinitely wise and powerful as well as good, we shoul trust in him, and depend upon him in all condition and seek to him for what we want? For what mor reasonable than to place our confidence in him, wh is able and willing to do us good; and to sue t him who knows our wants, and is ready to suppl them? And seeing he is truth itself, and hath bee pleased to reveal his will to us; what can be more rea sonable than to believe all those discoveries and reve lations which God who cannot lie, hath made to u and to comply with the intentions of them? And see ing he is the original pattern of all excellency and per fection; what can be more reasonable than to imitat the perfections of the divine nature, and to endeavou to be as like God as we can? And these are the sur of all religion. So that whoever firmly believes God, and that he hath revealed and made known h will to the world, cannot but be fully satisfied and per suaded of the reasonableness and equity of religion, an all those duties which religion requires of us; and con sequently of the possibility of performing all those du ties which religion requires of us, by the assistance o the grace and strength which God is ready to afford u if we beg it of him. For no man that believes th goodness of God, (which every man does that believe a God), can think that he will make it our duty to d any thing which he hath left us in an utter impossibilit of doing.

2. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied an persuaded of the necessity of religion; that is, that it i necessary to every man's interest to be religious; tha it will be highly for our advantage to be so, and e minently to our prejudice to be otherwise; that if w be so, we shall be happy, if we be not, we shall b miserable, and undone for ever. And every man tha believes a God, and the revelations which he hath made, cannot but be fully satisfied of this.

And this will appear upon these two accounts.

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. And

2. From the promises and threatenings of God's word

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. Every man that believes a God, must believe him to be th

supreme

supreme good; and the greatest happiness to consist in the enjoyment of him; and a separation from him to be the greatest misery. Now, God is not to be enjoyed, but in a way of religion. Holiness makes us like to God; and likeness will make us love him; and love will make us happy in the enjoyment of him; and without this it is impossible to be happy. There can be no happiness without pleasure and delight; and we cannot take pleasure in any thing we do not love; and there can be no love, without a likeness and suitableness of disposition. So long as God is good, and we evil; so long as he is pure, and we unholy; so long as he hates sin, and we love it; there can be no happy intercourse, no agreeable communion, and delightful society between God and us. So that if we be holy, happiness will result from this temper; and if we be wicked, we are necessarily and unavoidably miserable. Sin separates between God and us, and hinders our happiness; and it is impossible that a wicked man should be near God, or enjoy him. God and a sinner are such two unequal matches, that it is impossible to bring them together; for *what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness?*

2. Every man which believes the revelations which God hath made, cannot but be satisfied, how much religion is his interest from the promises and threatenings of God's word. God in his word hath in plain and express terms promised everlasting glory and happiness to them that obey him; and hath threatened wicked men with dreadful and eternal punishments; *to them that by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*, he hath promised *eternal life; but to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, he hath threatened *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*. Now, if we believe the gospel, which assures us of another life after this, and a future judgment, which will determine all men to a state of everlasting happiness or misery, we cannot but know it to be our interest, by all possible means to endeavour to attain the happiness which God hath promised, and to avoid the misery which he hath threatened. All men natu-

rally

rally desire happiness, and dread misery and destruction; and these desires and fears are intimate to our natures, and can never be separated from them; because they flow immediately from those principles of self-love, and self-preservation, which are deeply rooted in every man's heart, and are woven into the very make and frame of his nature, and will last as long as our beings. And so long as these principles remain in us, there is no man that is firmly persuaded of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, but must believe it to be his highest interest to be religious. Fear and hope are the two passions which govern us; hope is as it were the spur that quickens us to our duty, and fear is the curb that restrains us from sin; and the greater the good hoped for, or the evil that is feared, the greater power and influence these passions have upon us. Now, there cannot be a greater good, than complete and everlasting happiness; nor a greater evil, than extreme and eternal misery. So that whoever believes the promises and threatenings of the gospel, hath his hope raised to the expectation of the greatest good and happiness in case of obedience; and his fears extended to the expectation of the greatest evil and misery in case of final impenitency and disobedience. And a true divine faith doth contain in it both this hope and fear: for a faith in the promises of the gospel is nothing else, but the hopes of eternal life; and a belief of the threatenings of the gospel is nothing else, but the fear of hell and eternal misery. So that a firm belief of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, must needs have as great influence upon men to make them religious, as the highest hopes and greatest fears can have: and those men that are not moved by the hopes of the greatest good, nor by the fears of the greatest danger, are not to be wrought upon in human ways, nothing will prevail with them.

Thus I have shewn you, what influence a divine faith hath upon religion; for as much as whoever believes there is a God, and that the scriptures are the word of God, is fully satisfied and convinced how reasonable it is, and how much it is his interest to be religious. I come in the last place to the application of this discourse.

First,

First, This shews why there is so little of true religion in the world; it is for want of faith, without which it is impossible for men to be religious. Men are not firmly persuaded that there is a God; that there is a being above them that is omniscient, and knows every thing that they do, and takes notice of every word, and thought, and action; that is so good, and so powerful, as to make those happy that love and obey him; and so just and powerful, as to make those miserable who hate him, and rebel against him. Men are not persuaded that their souls are immortal; and that there is another life after this, in which men shall be happy or miserable to all eternity, according as they demean themselves in this world. Men are not firmly persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God, and that the precepts and prohibitions of the Bible are the laws of a great King, who will amply reward the observances of his laws, and severely vindicate the breach and violation of them. Men do not believe that the promises and threatenings of God's word are true, and that every jot and tittle of them shall be accomplished. For did men believe these things, they would be religious; they would not dare to live in any known sin or impiety of life; unless we can presume that a man can be seriously unwilling to be happy, and have a longing desire to be miserable, and undone for ever. For whoever believes the principles of religion, and the precepts, and promises, and threatenings that are contained in this holy book, and yet after all this can continue in sin, he must not only put off the principles of a reasonable creature, but must quit the very inclinations of his nature; that is, he must knowingly refuse that which he naturally desires, which is happiness; and must embrace that which of all things that can be imagined he most abhors, and that is misery.

So that if men were verily persuaded, that the great, and holy, and just God looks continually upon them, and that it is impossible to hide from him any thing that we do, they would not dare to commit any sin in his sight, and under the eye of him who is their Father and Master, their Sovereign and their Judge, their friend and Benefactor, who is invested with all these titles,

titles, and ſtands to us in all theſe relations which ma challenge reverence and reſpect. Did men believe th holineſs and juſtice of God, that he hates ſin, and wi not let it go unpuniſhed, would they venture to mak him a witneſs of their wickedneſs, who they believ will be the avenger of it? Did men believe that the ſhall live for ever, and that after this ſhort life is end ed, they muſt enter upon eternity; that when the leave the world, there are but two ways which a men muſt go, either into life everlaſting, or into eter nal and intolerable torments; did men believe thi would they not with all poſſible care and diligenc endeavour to attain the one, and avoid the other? Wer men poſſeſſed with a belief of eternity, how would the deſpiſe temporal and tranſitory things? How would the neglect the concernments of this life, and overlook th little impertinencies of time, and refer all their thought and cares, and endeavours, to eternity? This great an important intereſt would ſo fill their minds, and tak up their thoughts, and employ their utmoſt cares, ar endeavours, and diligence, that they would ſcarce regar or ſpeak, or think of any elſe; they would be reſtle and impatient, till they had ſecured this grand affair ar concernment; they would ſubordinate all the intere of this world to that of the other, and make all th concernments of time to ſtoop to the grand concernmer of eternity. Thus men would do, were they but firm perſuaded that there is another life after this, to whi this bears no proportion.

Did men believe the ſcriptures to be the word of Go and to contain matters of the higheſt importance to o everlaſting happineſs; would they neglect it and lay it ſide, and ſtudy it no more than a man would do an a manack out of date, or than a man, who believes t attaining the philoſopher's ſtone to be impoſſible, wou ſtudy thoſe books that treat of it? If men did belie that it contains plain and eaſy directions for the attai ing of eternal happineſs, and eſcaping eternal miſer they would converſe much with it, make it their con panion and their counſellor, *meditate in it day and nig* read it with all diligence, and put in practice the dire tions of it.

So that whatever men pretend, it is plain, that those who neglect God and religion, and contradict the precepts of his word by their lives, they do not firmly believe there is a God, nor that this book is the word of God. If this faith and persuasion were firmly rooted in men, they could not live wickedly. For a man that desires happiness, can no more neglect those means which he is convinced are necessary for the obtaining of it, than a man that desires life can neglect the means which he knows to be necessary for the preservation of it.

Secondly, If faith have so great an influence upon religion, then the next use shall be to persuade men to believe. No man can be religious that doth not believe these two things.

First, The principles of natural religion; that there is a God; that his soul is immortal; and that there are future rewards.

Secondly, That the scriptures are the word of God; or, which comes all to one, that the doctrine contained in them is a divine revelation. Therefore whoever would persuade men to be religious, he must begin here; and whoever would improve men in religion and holiness, he must labour to strengthen this principle of faith. Faith is the root of all other graces; and they will flourish, or decay, according to the degrees of our faith. Now, he that would persuade a man, or prevail with him to do any thing, must do it one of these three ways; either by intreaty, or authority, or argument; either he must intreat him as a friend, or command him as subject to him and under his power, or convince him as a man. Now, he that should go about to intreat men to believe any thing, or to charge them so to do, before he hath convinced them by sufficient arguments, that it is reasonable to do so, would, in my opinion, take a preposterous course. He that intreats or chargeth a man to do any thing, supposeth that he can do the thing if he will: but a man cannot believe what he will; the nature of a human understanding is such, that it cannot assent without evidence, nor believe any thing to be true, unless it see reason so to do, any more than a man can see a thing without light. So that if the dearest

friend

friend that I have in the world should beg of me with the greatest importunity; or any man that hath the greatest authority over me, should lay his severest commands upon me to believe a thing, for which I see no reason, I could not do it; because nothing can command assent, but evidence. So that he that would persuade men to believe either the principles of natural religion, or any divine revelation, must convince them of the truth of them; for it is unreasonable to desire a man to believe any thing, unless I give him good reason why he should.

And this being the proper course which is to be taken, there are two sorts of persons to whom I shall apply myself in this exhortation; those who do not believe these things; and those who are persuaded of them: to the former, in order to the begetting of faith in them; to the latter, in order to the strengthening and confirming of their faith.

Those who do not believe, are of two sorts; either such as do positively disbelieve these things, and make it their business to arm themselves against them with all the arguments they can; who are so far from believing a God, or any divine revelation, that they endeavour to persuade themselves of the contrary, that there is no such thing; or else they are such as are indifferent about these matters. They have received the principles of religion by their education, and they have nothing to say against them, nor for them; they never considered them, nor the proper consequences of them; they neither believe nor disbelieve them upon any reasonable account.

Now, all these are to be dealt withal in the same way: for whatever will convince the disbeliever, will much more persuade the indifferent, and confirm the weak. For faith is to be strengthened by the same arguments whereby it is wrought. Therefore I shall apply myself to convince unbelievers; and every one may apply those arguments which I use to this purpose, for the strengthening of their own faith.

But before I come to those arguments I intend to offer for the conviction of those that do not believe, I think it convenient to endeavour, if possible, to remove a violent,

olent, and, I think, unreasonable prejudice which men ve received against all those who endeavour to make ligion reasonable. As if Bellarmine had been in the ght, when he said, *That faith was rather to be defined ignorance than by knowledge.* The plain English of hich is, that it is for want of understanding that men lieve the gospel; and if the world were but a little ore knowing and wise, no body would be a Christian. know not how it comes to pass, whether through the tifice of the Popish party, *who hate the light, lest it ould reprove them, and make them manifest;* or through e ignorance of too many well-meaning Protestants; I y, I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that ery one that offers to give a reasonable account of s faith, and to establish religion upon rational prinples, is presently branded for a Socinian; of which e have a sad instance in that incomparable person Mr illingworth, the glory of this age and nation, who for other cause that I know of, but his worthy and successful attempts to make Christian religion reasonable, and discover those firm and solid foundations upon which ir faith is built, hath been requited with this black d odious character. But if this be Socinianism, for man to inquire into the grounds and reasons of Chriian religion, and to endeavour to give a satisfactory count why he believes it, I know no way but that all nsiderate, inquisitive men, that are above fancy and thusiasm, must be either Socinians or Atheists.

I cannot imagine how men can do greater disservice religion, than by taking it off from the rational and lid basis upon which it stands, and bearing the world hand, that men ought to believe without reason; for is is to turn faith into credulity, and to level Christian ligion with the vilest and most groundless enthusiasms at ever were in the world. Indeed, if we had only to al with Henry Nicholas, and Jacob Behmen, who ght against us in the dark, not with reasons and argunents, but with insignificant words, and obscure phrases; e might make a shift to bear up against them with is principle, and we might charge them to believe , as they do us to believe them, without giving them y reason for it: but if we were to deal with Celsus,

or Julian, or Prophyry, or some of our modern Atheists we should soon find how vain it would be to go about to cajole them with phrases, and to gain them over to Christianity, by telling them that they must deny their reason, and lay aside their understandings, and believe they know not why. If the great pillars of Christianity, the ancient fathers, had taken this course in their apologies for Christian religion, it had never triumphed over Judaism and Paganism as it did; and whoever hath read over those defences and vindications of Christian religion against Jews and Heathens, which were written in the first ages of the church, especially the books of Origen against Celsus, and Eusebius his books *de Demonst.* and *Præparat. Evangel.* shall find that they did very solicitously endeavour to satisfy the world, by all rational ways, both of the truth and reasonableness of Christian religion. And if that was a good way then it is so now; and never more necessary than in this age which I fear hath as many Atheists and infidels, that go under the name of Christians, as ever were in any age since Christian religion was first planted in the world.

But my design at present is not to persuade men particularly to the belief of Christianity, (that I intend hereafter, by God's assistance, to speak to), but to persuade men to the belief of religion in general. So that all that I shall do at present, shall be, as briefly as I can, to offer some arguments and considerations to persuade men to the belief of the principles of natural religion and of the revelation which God hath made of his mind and will in the scriptures.

I. To persuade men to believe the principles of natural religion, such as the being of a God; the immortality of the soul; and future rewards after this life; I shall offer these two considerations.

First, That it is most reasonable so to do.

Secondly, That it is infinitely most prudent.

First, As to the being of God. Do but consider these two things which are undeniable; that there is a world however it came; and that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever be the cause of it. Now, these two things being certain, and not liable to any question, let us inquire whether

hether a reasonable account can be given of these without a God.

1. Supposing there be no God, how came this vast nd orderly frame of the world? There are but two ays that can be imagined. Either it was from eterity always of itself; or it began some time to be. hat it should be always of itself; though it may be nagined of the heavens, and the earth, which, as to he main, are permanent, and continue the same; yet in hings that succeed one after another, it is altogether unnaginable. As in the generation of men, there can be o doubt, whether every one of them was from another, r some of themselves. Some of them must be of hemselves; for whatever number of causes be imagied in orderly succession, some of them must have no ause, but be of themselves. Now, that which is of itelf, and the cause of all others, is the first. So that here must be a first man; and the age of man being finite, this first man must have a beginning. So that an nfinite succession of men should have been, is impossible; and consequently that men were always. But I need not insist much upon this, because few or none of our modern Atheists pitch upon this way. Besides that Aristotle, who is reputed the great assertor of the eternity of the world, doth acknowledge an infinite progress and succession of causes to be one of the greatest absurdities.

Suppose then the world began sometime to be; it must either be made by counsel and design; that is, produced by some being that knew what it did, that did contrive and frame it as it is; which it is easy to conceive a being that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, might do; but this is to own a God: or else the matter of it being supposed to have been always, and in continual motion and tumult, it at last happened to fall into this order, and the parts of matter, after various agitations, were at length intangled and knit together in this order, in which we see the world to be. But can any man think this reasonable to imagine, that in the infinite variety which is in the world, all things should happen by chance, as well and as orderly as the greatest wisdom could have contrived

them? Whoever can believe this, must do it with h will, and not with his understanding.

But seeing it must be granted that something is of i self; how easy is it to grant such a being to be of itse as hath other perfections proportionable to necessa existence, that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerfu And there will be no difficulty in conceiving how such being as this could make the world.

2. This likewise is undeniable, that mankind do g nerally consent in a confident persuasion that there is God, whatever was the cause of this. Now, the reaso of so universal a consent in all places and ages of th world, must be one and constant: but no one and con stant reason of this can be given, unless it be from th frame and nature of man's mind and understanding which hath the notion of a Deity stamped upon it, or which is all one, hath such an understanding, as will i its own free use and exercise find out a God. And wha more reasonable than to think, that if we be God' workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon us that we might know to whom we belong? And I dar say, that this account must be much more reasonable and satisfactory to any indifferent man, than to resolve this universal consent into tradition, or state-policy, both which are liable to inexplicable difficulties, as * I have elsewhere shewn at large.

II. As to the immortality of the soul. Supposing a God, who is an infinite spirit, it is easy to imagine the possibility of a finite spirit: and supposing the goodness of God, no man can doubt, but that when he made all things, he would make some best: and the same goodness which moved him to make things, would be a reason to continue those things for the longest duration they are capable of.

III. As to future rewards. Supposing the holiness and justice of God, that *he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity*; and that he is the magistrate and governor of the world, and concerned to countenance goodness and discourage sin; and considering the promiscuous dispensation of his providence in this world, and how all

*See vol. 1. serm. 1. where the arguments here briefly named are handled at large.

things

things happen alike to all; it is most reasonable to conclude, that, after this life, men shall be punished and rewarded

Secondly, It is infinitely most prudent. In matters of great concernment a prudent man will incline to the safest side of the question. We have considered which side of these questions is most reasonable: let us now think which is safest. For it is certainly most prudent to incline to the safest side of the question. Supposing the reasons for and against the principles of religion were equal, yet the danger and hazard is so unequal, as would sway a prudent man to the affirmative. Suppose a man believe there is no God, nor life after this; and suppose he be in the right, but not certain that he is, for that, I am sure, in this case is impossible; all the advantage he hath by this opinion, relates only to this world and this present time: for he cannot be the better for it when he is not. Now, what advantage will it be to him in this life? He shall have the more liberty to do what he pleaseth: that is, it furnisheth him with a stronger temptation to be intemperate, and lustful, and unjust, that is, to do those things which prejudice his body and his health, which cloud his reason, and darken his understanding, which will make him enemies in the world, and will bring him into danger. So that it is no advantage to any man to be vitious: and yet this is the greatest use that is made of atheistical principles, to comfort men in their vitious courses. But if thou hast a mind to be virtuous, and temperate, and just, the belief of the principles of religion will be no obstacle, but a furtherance to thee in this course. All the advantage a man can hope for by disbelieving the principles of religion, is to escape trouble and persecution in this world, which may happen to him on account of religion. But supposing there be a God, and a life after this; then what a vast difference is there of the consequences of these opinions! As much as between finite and infinite, time and eternity.

Secondly, To persuade men to believe the scriptures, I only offer this to mens consideration. If there be a God, whose providence governs the world, and all the creatures in it, is it not reasonable to think that he

hath a particular care of men, the noblest part of this visible world? And seeing he hath made them capable of eternal duration; that he hath provided for their eternal happiness, and sufficiently revealed to them the way to it, and the terms and conditions of it: now let any man produce any book in the world, that pretends to be from God, and to do this; that for the matter of it, is so worthy of God, the doctrines whereof are so useful, and the precepts so reasonable, and the arguments so powerful, the truth of all which was confirmed by so many great and unquestionable miracles, the relation of which hath been transmitted to posterity, in public and authentic records, written by those who were eye and ear witnesses of what they wrote, and free from suspicion of any worldly interest and design; let any produce a book like this, in all these respects; and which, over and besides, hath, by the power and reasonableness of the doctrines contained in it, prevailed so miraculously in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, in opposition to all the wit and power of the world, and under such discouragements, as no other religion was ever assaulted with; let any man bring forth such a book, and he hath my leave to believe it as soon as the Bible. But if there be none such, as I am well assured there is not, then every one that thinks God hath revealed himself to men, ought to embrace and entertain the doctrine of the holy scriptures, as revealed by God.

And now having presented men with such arguments and considerations as are proper, and, I think, sufficient to induce belief, I think it not unreasonable to intreat and urge men diligently and impartially to consider these matters; and if there be weight in these considerations to sway reasonable men, that they would not suffer themselves to be biassed by prejudice, or passion, or interest, to a contrary persuasion. Thus much I may with reason desire of men: for though men cannot believe what they will, yet men may, if they will, consider things seriously and impartially, and yield or with-hold their assent, as they shall see cause, after a thorough search and examination.

If

If any man will offer a serious argument against any the principles of religion, and will debate the mat- soberly, as one that considers the infinite consequen- of things one way or other, and would gladly be isfied, he deserves to be heard what he can say: but a man will turn religion into raillery, and confute it two or three bold jests; he doth not make religion, t himself ridiculous, in the opinion of all considerate en; because he sports with his life.

So that it concerns every man that would not trifle vay his soul, and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, ith the greatest seriousness to inquire into these ings, whether they be so or no, and patiently to con- ler the arguments that are brought for them.

And when you are examining these matters, do not ke into consideration any sensual or worldly interest; t deal fairly and impartially with yourselves. Think ith yourselves that you have not the making of ings true or false; that the principles of religion are ther true or false, before you think of them. The truth f things is already fixed; either there is a God, or no od; either your souls are immortal, or they are not; ither the scriptures are a divine revelation, or an im- osture; one of these is certain and necessary, and they re not now to be altered: things will not comply with our conceits, and bend themselves to your interests. Therefore do not think what you would have to be; ut consider impartially what is*.

And if, upon inquiry, you be convinced that it is the greatest reason and prudence to believe that there is a God, and a future state, and that the scriptures are the word of God; then meditate much of these things; at- end to the proper consequences of such a persuasion; nd resolve to live as becomes those who believe there s a God, and another life after this, and that it is best for you to obey the precepts of his word, being persua- ded that whatever is there promised in case of obedience, or threatened in case of disobedience, will certainly be accomplished.

And labour to strengthen yourselves in this belief; because faith is the spring of all rational actions, and

* Of this see more in the sermon above mentioned.

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the root of all other graces; and according to t strength and weakness of faith, your holiness, and ob dience, and graces, will flourish or decay.

And because the matters of faith do not fall unc our senses, and the things of another world are invisib and at distance, and consequently not so apt to affi us, as present and visible things, we should take t more pains with ourselves, that by revolving frequent in our minds the thoughts of God, and representing ourselves the happiness and misery of another worl they may have as great an effect upon us, as if th were present to us, and we saw them with our bodi eyes.

SERMON CCXXV.

Of the Christian faith, the means of its con veyance, and our obligation to receive it

JOHN xx. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye migh have life through his name.

The first sermon on this text.

I Have largely discoursed concerning the general na ture of faith, and more particularly concerning th faith which is truly divine and religious; in the la titude of which is contained a persuasion concerning th principles of natural religion, the being of God, the im mortality of the soul, and a future state; and a per suasion of the divine revelation of the scriptures, an the matters contained in them. Now, among matter of divine revelation, the doctrine of the gospel is a prin cipal part; which is the last and most perfect revela tion, which God hath made to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ; and a firm belief and persuasion of this i

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hat which is called Christian faith, or the faith of the gospel; and which, by way of eminency, is usually called faith in the New Testament.

Now, Christian faith is not opposed to a divine faith, but is comprehended under it; as being a principal and eminent part of divine faith, but not all that which may be called divine faith. Christian faith supposeth a belief of the principles of natural religion; and a belief of those revelations which God formerly made under the Old Testament: but it doth only formally contain in it a belief of the gospel, *viz.* that revelation which God hath in these last days made to the world by his Son Jesus Christ. The Heathens who were destitute of divine revelation, did only believe the principles of natural religion; and the generality of them did not believe those but in a very imperfect manner. The Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, did superadd to the belief of the principles of natural religion, the belief of such revelations as God was pleased to make to them under that dispensation. Christian faith superadds to both the former, a belief of the revelation of the gospel.

I shall now therefore, by God's assistance, endeavour to open to you the nature of Christian faith from these words; in which you have these three things considerable.

First, The end of committing the gospel to writing, which was to persuade men to believe in Christ, to propagate and continue Christian faith in the world; *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; and by faith to bring men to a participation of those benefits, and the salvation which Christ was the author of; *and that believing ye might have life through his name. These are written*; αὗτα, *these*; which may either refer to σημεῖα, *these signs or miracles*, referring to the former verse, *and many other signs*, &c. but *these signs or miracles are written* to confirm Jesus to be the person he pretended to be, the Messias, the Son of God, and consequently to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he delivered; that, by this confirmation, men might be induced to believe

him

him to be the true Messias, and to give entertainme to his doctrine.

Or else, which is very probable, the word ταῦ may refer to the whole history of the gospel, in whi you have an account of the life of Christ, and t doctrine which he taught, and the miracles which we wrought for the confirmation of it. And so we m look upon these two verses as a conclusion of the who history of the gospel writ by the four evangelists. Fo as for the chapter following, it seems not to be writt by St John himself, but by the church, probably, Grotius conjectures, by the church of Ephesus, whe he had resided, and whom he had acquainted with t particulars which are there set down; the principal which is, the prediction of our Saviour concerning h long life, for the sake of which the rest of the sto seems to be brought in; which particular was not fit t be recorded till after his death; I say, it seems pr bable that St John ended his gospel here, and that t last chapter was added by others, as the last chapt of the Pentateuch was added by some other after t death of Moses; and the last chapter of Joshua after h death. And this seems very evident from the 24th ver of the chapter; where, after a relation of our Saviour prediction, concerning *the disciple whom Jesus loved,* is added, *This is the disciple which testifieth of these thing and wrote these things,* that is, the foregoing history the gospel, *and we know that his testimony is true;* whic seems plainly to be spoken by some other persons: for i were improper for him to say this of himself, *We kno that his testimony is true.*

So that here seems to be the end of the history Christ which St John wrote; and these two ver seem to be the conclusion of the whole gospel writte by the four evangelists, and then the sense of them wil be this: *Many other signs truly did Jesus in the pre sence of his disciples, which are not written in this book* that is, the disciples were witnesses of many other mi racles which Christ wrought, which they did not thinl necessary to set down in this book, that is, in thi history of Christ written by the four evangelists: *Bu these are written, that ye might believe that Jesu*

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the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might ve life through his name; that is, these things which re recorded in this history, this account which is here iven of the life, and actions, and doctrine, and miracles f Christ, is sufficient to bring men to the faith of ie gospel, to satisfy men that Christ was the Messias, ie Son of God, and consequently that his doctrine is ue.

And that this conclusion doth refer to the whole hiory of the gospel written by the four evangelists, I am duced to believe, upon these two accounts.

1. Because St John's gospel doth not seem to be inended for a history of the life and actions of Christ; ut an appendix to the history which had been written efore by the other evangelists, and to supply only vhat they had omitted. Therefore you shall find that ie gives no account of the genealogy or birth of our Saiour, nor of his sermon upon the mount, which did ontain the sum of his doctrine, nor of any of his miracles, or his other discourses, which are related by the ther evangelists; nor doth he relate any more of the istory of his life, than was just necessary to bring in, nd connect those things which he thought fit to superadd to the former history. So that considering how defective this gospel, taken by itself, is in the most essential parts of the history of the life, and doctrine, and actions of Christ; no man can think that St John did intend this for a full and sufficient acount of the life, and doctrine, and miracles of Christ; or that upon this imperfect relation, in which he had knowingly omitted many of the most material and considerable things belonging to the history of Christ, he could expect that men should receive full satisfaction concerning him. Therefore, I think, it is highly reasonable, and almost necessary to conclude, that when he says, *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;* he does not solely refer to the gospel which was written by himself; but to the whole history of the gospel, which was put together into one book or volume, which was completed by this appendix.

2. Another reason I have for this, which doth much strengthen this conjecture, is what I find in Eusebius,

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in the 18th chapter of the third book of his histor where he tells us to this purpose, "That St John, w "lived the last of the apostles, did revise what th "had written of the history of Christ, and added t "gospel as an appendix to the rest."

I have insisted the longer upon this, that no m might think, when St John says, *These things were wri ten that ye might believe*, that his gospel taken alone ar by itself, is a sufficient account of Christ, and contains a that was requisite to bring men to believe on him. Th is the first thing in the words, the end of committin the gospel to writing.

Secondly, You have here the nature of Christian fait described; it is *a believing that Jesus is the Christ, th Son of God*; that is, that he is the true Messias prophe sied of in the Old Testament, and promised as the Sa viour of the world; and that he is the Son of God, wh came from the Father into the world; and took on nature upon him, that he might teach us and go befor us in the way to eternal happiness.

Thirdly, The blessed effect of this faith, or the bene fit that redounds to us upon believing; *that believing ye might have life through his name*; that is, that upon these terms and conditions you might be made partaker of all those blessings and benefits which Christ, th Saviour of the world, hath purchased for us, which ar here set forth to us in the name of life; it being usual in the phrase of scripture, to express to us those things which are most excellent and desirable by life. Now, the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which in scripture we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are regeneration, justification, or pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation; and the two first of these, as well as the last, are called life in scripture. Regeneration, (in which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification), that is, a new life; Rom. vi. 4. it is called *newness of life*. And we are said to have this life by faith, Gal. ii. 20. *And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* And Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him*; that is, regenerated and born to a new life. How? *By the*

faith

faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead; that is, by believing the power of God, who raised up Christ from the dead, for the confirmation of the truth of the gospel: 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* So likewise justification is called life. While we are under sentence of condemnation, we are dead in law: but being justified and pardoned, we are restored to life. So the Apostle expresseth it, Rom. v. 18. *So by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* And that we are justified by faith, the Scripture tells us so frequently, that I shall not cite any texts for it.

And then eternal life and salvation; and this is the consummation of all, and I doubt not but is here principally intended in the text by the word *life*. So that the meaning of this expression, *that believing ye might have life through his name*, is, that, by faith of the gospel, ye might be renewed, and pardoned, and saved; though, I think, that the last, *viz.* eternal life and salvation, is principally, though not solely intended; as will appear by comparing this place with these parallel texts: John iii 15. *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* John v. 24. *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.* 1 Pet. i. 9. *The end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

Thus I have, as briefly as I well could, explained to you the meaning of the words, which I have done the more fully, that you may see how these observations, which I shall raise from them, are contained in them. The observations are these.

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way to convey the knowledge of the gospel to the world. *These things are written.*

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed in order to salvation, are contained in the gospel. *These things are written, that ye might believe, and believing might have life:* but if any thing necessary to be believed by Christians, in order to eternal salvation,

were omitted, then the gospel would be written to n purpose, and would fail in the end for which it wa written.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel ar a proper and sufficient means or argument, to brin men to Christian faith. For this is the narrowest an most restrained sense in which we can take the words *These things*, that is, *these miracles, are written, that y might believe*, &c. Now, if St John, by the Spirit o God, did record miracles to this end, we may conclud that they are proper and sufficient for this end.

Fourthly, That a credible history does give men suf ficient assurance of matter of fact, and such as we may safely build a divine faith upon. For if these miracle were recorded for this end, *that men might believe*, that a credible history or relation that such miracles were done, is sufficient to assure us that such miracles were wrought; and upon this assurance we may build our faith: otherwise it had been in vain to have recorded these miracles to this end.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because we have these writings credibly conveyed to us, which contain the doctrine of the gospel, and the relation of the miracles written for the confirmation of it.

Sixthly, That men now-a-days, those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or, which is all one, that now-a-days men may be guilty of such a sin as unbelief: for now-a-days we may have sufficient grounds of faith.

Seventhly, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. This is the description which is here given of it, that it is a *believing, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

Eighthly, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith; by this faith we have life. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*

These observations are all virtually contained in the words. The greatest part of them I shall very lightly

ightly pass over, and speak but briefly to them, because I intend mainly to insist upon the two last; in the handling of which, I shall open to you the nature of Christian faith, and shew you, that the faith which is here described, is that which is truly and properly justifying and saving.

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way of conveying the knowledge of the gospel to the world. This is matter of fact, and for the proof of it we have the evidence of the thing. The gospel *de facto* was written, and this writing is conveyed down to us, and is the instrument which God hath in all ages since the apostles times, that is, since the eye and ear witnesses of the miracles of Christ and his doctrine ceased, made use of to convey to the world the knowledge of the gospel. And here it were proper to shew what advantage this way of conveyance of the gospel hath above oral tradition: but that I have already done in some former discourses *, where I shewed at large, that this way of conveyance is a more universal and diffusive, a more certain, and liable to less imposture and falsification, a more equal and uniform, and a more human way of conveyance than oral tradition; so that I shall not insist longer upon this.

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed by Christians in order to salvation, are contained in the written gospel: or else how could St John in reason say, that *these things were written*, to this end, *that men might believe and be saved*, if these things be not sufficient to this end? which certainly they are not, if any thing necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, be left out. The Papists being urged with this text, to prove the sufficiency of the written word, in opposition to those traditional doctrines which they pretend to be necessary over and besides the written word, tell us, that St John doth not here speak of the doctrine of Christ, but only of his miracles; these were written to confirm our faith of the Messias; but the doctrine of Christ was not all written, but left to the apostles to be delivered by mouth to their successors, and so down

* See the foregoing sermons in this volume.

to posterity. But I have shewn before, that the necessary doctrines of the gospel, as well as the miracles, are comprehended in these things which St John says were written. Besides that, it will be very hard for any man to devise a convenient reason, why miracles, as well as doctrines, might not have been left to the apostles, to have been traditionally delivered down to posterity without writing. For doctrines may as well be committed to writing, as relations of miracles: and miracles may be, with as much ease, and certainty, and convenience in all respects, delivered down to posterity by an oral tradition, as doctrines may.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel are a proper and sufficient means to bring men to Christian faith. That they are so, it is a good sign that God did work them to this end, and afterwards commit them to writing for this very reason, that the knowledge of them might be conveyed to posterity, and there might still remain in the world a proper and sufficient argument to persuade men to believe; and we may well imagine, that God would not do any thing but what is very proper and sufficient for its end. Now, that miracles were wrought by the divine power purposely to this end, and that they are in reason a very sufficient attestation to a person, and confirmation of the doctrine which he brings, I have largely shewn elsewhere*; and that all along, both in the Old and New Testament, God did impower Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to work miracles, to bring men to faith; and that this was the principal argument whereby those who did believe were wrought upon.

Fourthly, That credible history doth give men sufficient assurance of matter of fact; and such assurance as we may safely build a divine faith upon. We freely believe innumerable things, which are said to have been done many ages before we were born, and make not the least doubt of them, only upon the credit of history: so that if the relation of miracles be but granted to be a credible history, we may, upon the credit of the relation, safely believe that such miracles were wrought; and if such miracles were wrought, we may safely believe

* See the foregoing sermons in this volume.

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the doctrine to be from God, for the confirmation of which they were wrought; and consequently, a divine faith may be safely built upon such an assurance of miracles, as we may have from a credible history and relation.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because the doctrine of the gospel hath still the same confirmation that it had, *viz.* miracles: only we who live at this distance from the time when, and the place where, they were wrought, have the knowledge of them conveyed to us, and come to be assured of them in another way. Those who lived in the age of Christ and his apostles had assurance of miracles from their own senses: and we are now assured of them by credible history and relation. Now, though these ways be not equal, yet they are both sufficient to beget in us an undoubted assurance, and such as no prudent man hath any reason to doubt of. For a man may be as truly and undoubtedly certain, that is, as well satisfied, that a thing was done, from the credit of history, as from his own senses. I make no more doubt whether there was such a person as Henry the Eighth King of England, than I do whether I be in this place.

Sixthly, That now-a-days those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or that now-a-days there is such a sin as unbelief of the gospel. And I the rather note this, because there are some well-wishers to Atheism, who, out of prudence and regard to their own safety, chuse rather secretly to undermine religion, than openly to deny it. I grant indeed, that in our Saviour's time, when such great miracles were wrought, those who saw those miracles, which they think no body did, were under an obligation to believe, and guilty of a great sin in not believing the gospel: but now-a-days, when we see no such miracles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, there lies no obligation upon any man to believe it; and that now there is no such sin as unbelief. Now, any man may, with half an eye, see the consequence of this assertion: for being once admitted, it doth as certainly destroy Christian religion, as if men should deny that there was any

such person as Jesus Christ, or that he ever wrought any miracles: for, if to disbelieve the gospel be no sin and consequently brings a man into no danger; but on the other hand, dangers and persecutions do attend the belief and profession of it, it were the greatest folly in the world for any man to believe; unless this possibly may be greater, for a man who does believe it, not to obey and live according to it. And if this were true, it were the greatest imprudence that can be, for any man to be a Christian. And if that were once admitted, there is all the reason in the world that Christianity should be banished and extirpated; not only as useless and impertinent, but as a thing dangerous and pernicious to the welfare of mankind.

I shall therefore briefly prove to you, that it is now one of the greatest sins that men are capable of, (except the sin against the Holy Ghost), for those who have the gospel sufficiently propounded to them, to disbelieve it; I say, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which, our Saviour tells us, was *blaspheming the Spirit of God*, whereby he wrought his miracles, and saying it was the spirit of the devil; and this sin, men in a lower degree and proportion may now-a-days be guilty of: for as the Pharisees who saw the works that Christ did, and acknowledged them to be miracles, did commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, in ascribing those miracles which were really wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the power of the devil; so men now-a-days, who own the history of Christ's miracles as true, may be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in a lower proportion, by maliciously imputing those miracles to the power of the devil.

But, excepting the sin against the Holy Ghost, the greatest sin that men are now capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel, when it is sufficiently propounded to them. Now, the gospel is then sufficiently propounded, when there are sufficient grounds offered to persuade men to the belief of it; and I have already proved, that we now have sufficient ground to believe the gospel; and if so, then whosoever hath these grounds offered to him, is under an obligation to believe it: for every man is bound to believe that, for which he hath sufficient

ufficient ground and reason: and every man sins who neglects his duty, that is, does not do that which he stands bound to do.

And not only whoever disbelieves the gospel, sins in so doing, but farther, he commits the greatest sin that now men are capable of. I say, now capable of; for I doubt not but that it was a sin of a higher degree, for those who saw Christ's miracles to disbelieve, than it is for us who have only the relation of them. For, by the same reason, that *he is more blessed that believes, and hath not seen;* a greater curse belongs to him, *who hath seen, and yet doth not believe;* and consequently such a person is guilty of a greater sin. But because we cannot now see the miracles of Christ, the greatest sin that men in this age are capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel confirmed by miracles, whereof we are assured by credible relation. For the sin of disbelieving hath now these two aggravations.

1. It is a sin against sufficient light and evidence; and in this it is equal to the sins which are committed against natural light.

2. It is a sin against the greatest mercies and blessings that ever were offered to the world; and in this it exceeds the sins against natural light. Whoever disbelieves the gospel, he rejects the offer of eternal life and happiness. And these two aggravations the Apostle puts together, Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* And if this be thus, it highly concerns us to inquire into the nature of this faith; and this brings me to the

Seventh observation, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. But the consideration of this I shall leave to the next opportunity.

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SERMON CCXXVI.

Of the Christian faith, which sanctifies, justifies, and saves.

JOHN xx. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The second sermon on this text.

IN my former discourse upon these words, I propose eight observations from them, six of which I have already dispatched, designing to discourse of the remaining two more at large. I proceed therefore to the

Seventh observation which I laid down, *viz.* That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. This is the description which is here given of Christian faith.

In prosecution of this, I shall do these two things.

First, Shew you what is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

Secondly, Prove that this is truly and properly Christian faith.

First, What is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?* It signifies a firm and effectual persuasion, that Jesus, that is, the person the history of whose life and death is related in the gospel, is the Christ that is, the true Messias, promised and propheſied of in the Old Testament to be the Saviour of the world; and that he is *the Son of God*, that is, *the only begotten of the Father*, who was sent by him into the world, and took our nature upon him, that he might purchase eternal happiness for us, and instruct us, and go before us

in the way to it. So that faith is a firm and effectual persuasion of, or assent to the whole gospel. Faith signifies Christian religon, which comprehends an assent to the doctrines of the gospel, and a suitable life and conversation.

I say, a firm persuasion of this; for in the phrase of the New Testament, none are accounted true believers, or said to have a true faith in Christ, who do not firmly continue in this persuasion; and the owning and profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and profections it might expose them to. And an effectual persuasion, for none are said truly to believe in Christ, who do not shew forth the proper and genuine effects of this faith, who do not live as they believe, and conform their lives to that doctrine, to the truth whereof they profess an assent.

And hence it is, that true Christians, that is, those who did fashion their lives according to the gospel, are called believers, and the sum of all Christianity is usually contained in this word *believing*, which is the great principle of a Christian life; as in the Old Testament, true religion is expressed by the *faith of God*; so in the New, by *faith in Christ*.

Now, whosoever doth firmly and effectually entertain this truth, that that Jesus whom the gospel declares to us, is the true Messias, and Saviour of the world, and the very Son of God, sent by him into the world for this purpose, that he might by his doctrine instruct, and by the example of his life go before us in the way to eternal happiness, and by the merit and satisfaction of his death and sufferings, appease and reconcile God to men, and purchase for them the pardon of their sins and eternal life, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and sincere obedience; I say, whosoever doth firmly and effectually entertain these truths, will consequently endeavour to obey the precepts of his doctrine, and to imitate the example of his life, and will expect salvation, that is, the pardon of his sins, and eternal life from no other; because he is verily persuaded he is a teacher, and a Saviour sent from God, that his doctrine is true, and his satisfaction available, and that the rewards which he hath promised to

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those who believe and obey him, and the punishme which he hath threatened to the unbelievers and di bedient, shall all certainly be fulfilled and accomplish All this is included in *believing that Jesus is the Chr the Son of God.* So Christian faith, or the faith of gospel, contains plainly in it these particulars.

1. An assent of the understanding to this truth, t Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was a person commissio from heaven, and employed by God to bring men to ternal happiness. And this fundamental is necessary all the subsequent acts of faith, and that upon wh they depend.

2. An assent of the understanding to the truth of those things which this person delivered to the worl So that if he tells us, that his death hath made exp tion for the sins of men, upon the conditions of faith, a repentance, and obedience, and that God by him dc command the world to do such and such things, and case of obedience will confer such and such rewards u on men, but in case of disobedience will inflict such p nishments upon them; we are to believe all this to true; because the person who acquainted us with th things was sent by God, and employed from heaven u on this message.

3. And consequently, a relying and depending up him, and no other, for the conferring of these benefi and making good these promises to us.

4. Obedience to all his laws and commands; becau believing them to be from God, we cannot but asse to them as good, and as laying an obligation upon us yield obedience to them; and if we do not obey ther we are presumed to disbelieve them; for if we did tru and heartily believe them to be the commands of Go we would obey them.

Now, that obedience of heart and life to the precep and commands of the gospel, as well as an assent of t understanding to the truth of the gospel-revelation, an a trusting and relying upon the merits of Christ, is ir cluded in the scripture-notion of faith, will evidentl appear to any that will consider these texts. Rom. 5. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship for c bedience to the faith among all nations for his name*

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here the belief of the goſpel is called *the obedience of faith.* Rom. x. 16. *But they have not all obeyed the goſpel,* for Eſaias ſaith, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* But if faith doth not include obedience, how could he prove that there were ſome that did not obey the goſpel, becauſe Iſaiah ſaid, there were ſome that did not believe it? And ſo likewiſe by comparing 1 Tim. iv. 10. where he is ſaid to be *the ſaviour of them that believe,* with Heb. v. 9. where he is ſaid to be the *author of eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey him.* As alſo by comparing Gal. v. 6. where it is ſaid, *For in Jeſus Chriſt, neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but faith which worketh by love;* with 1 Cor. vii. 19. *Circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.* And likewiſe by thoſe texts, where unbelief and diſobedience are equivalently uſed. I will but mention one, Heb. iii. 12. The Apoſtle, from the example of the Iſraelites, cautions Chriſtians againſt unbelief: *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* And in repeating the ſame caution in the next chapter, at the 11th verſe, he varies the phraſe a little, *Leſt any man fall after the ſame example of diſobedience;* the word is ἀπειθείας, which indeed our tranſlators render *unbelief,* but that confirms that which I bring it for, that diſobedience and unbelief are the ſame. And ſo likewiſe we find faith and diſobedience oppoſed frequently in Scripture. John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life: and he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life.* In the Greek it is, *he that obeyeth not the Son,* as you will ſee in the margin of the Bible. 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be diſobedient, the ſtone which the builders diſallowed, the ſame is made the head of the corner.* And this doth likewiſe appear in all thoſe texts, wherein repentance, and our forgiving of others, and ſeveral other acts of obedience, are made the conditions of our juſtification; or the omiſſion of them, ſins, as well as faith. So that we cannot be ſaid *to be juſtified by faith alone,* unleſs that faith include in it obedience. I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe

the

the right understanding the scripture-notion of faith Christ, doth very much depend upon this: and if th one thing, that the scripture-notion of faith doth i clude in it obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we but well understood and considered, it would silen and put an end to those infinite controversies about fai and justification, which have so much troubled t Christian world, to the great prejudice of practical r ligion, and holiness of life.

Secondly, That this is truly and properly Christia faith. Which I shall prove by these two arguments.

1. Because it includes a belief of the whole gospe or of all the revelation which God hath made to th world by Jesus Christ. And certainly, there cannc be a more proper notion of Christian faith, than t believe the revelation which God hath made by Jesi Christ: but to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the So of God, doth include this. For whosoever believes hi to be the Messias, and the Son of God, believes hi to have come from God, and to be authorised and com missioned by him to make known his mind to the worl and consequently will believe whatever he delivers. Fo whoever believes the goodness and veracity of God, a every man does that believes a God, cannot but assen to the truth of every thing which he is satisfied come from God.

2. That *to belive that Jesus is the Christ, the Son o God*, is truly and properly Christian faith, or the fait of the gospel, will appear, by considering how the scrip tures of the New Testament do constantly describe t us the faith of the gospel; and you shall find they d it, either by the very phrase in the text, or othe phrases and metaphors equivalent to them, or else by belief of that which is the great argument and confirma tion of Christ's being the Messias, the Son of God. Ve ry often the faith of the gospel is described by the very phrase in the text, *believing that Jesus is the Christ* and that *he is the Son of God*. John iv. 41. 42. *And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*. John vi.

69.

69. *And we believe, and are ſure, that thou art that Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* John xi. 27. ſays Martha to Chriſt, *Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world.* Acts viii. 37 *I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God.* 1 John iii. 23. *And this is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another, as he gave us commandment*; that is, that we ſhould believe on him under this name and title of *Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God.* 1 John v. 1. *Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God.* And ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God?* And ver. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God,* that is, believeth Jeſus to be *the Son of God.* And ver. 13. *Theſe things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Sometimes the faith of the goſpel is deſcribed to us by other phraſes that are tantamount to theſe; ſuch as ſignify that he *came from God,* and was ſent by him into the world, and was the Meſſias whom they expected. John iii. 2. Nicodemus deſcribes his faith in Chriſt thus, *I know that thou art a teacher come from God.* John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent,* that is, that ye believe me to be ſent from God. John viii. 24. *For if ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins;* that is, if ye believe not that I am the Meſſias, whom you expect and look for. And ſo John xiii. 19. *That ye may believe that I am he.* And John xi. 42. *That they may believe that thou haſt ſent me.* And John xvi. 30. *By this we believe that thou cameſt forth from God.* And John xvii. 8. *They have believed that thou didſt ſend me.*

Sometimes the faith of the goſpel is expreſſed by metaphors equivalent to theſe expreſſions; as by *coming to Chriſt,* and receiving him as the true Meſſias, in ſeveral places; and ſometimes by believing that which is the great argument and confirmation that Chriſt was the true Meſſias, the Son of God, that is, believing his reſurrection from the dead. Rom. iv. 24. *To whom it ſhall be*

imputed for righteousness, *if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.* Rom. x. 9. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Col. ii. 12. *Through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him up from the dead.* Where faith is described by a belief of the power whereby Christ was raised from the dead. And to mention no more, 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead.* Now, the reason why the faith of the gospel is described by the belief of Christ's resurrection, is, because whoever believes that Christ was raised from the dead, cannot but be satisfied, that this great miracle was a sufficient attestation that he was no impostor, but that he was what he pretended to be, *viz. the Son of God;* and consequently that he ought to be believed and obeyed in all things. And thus much may suffice to have spoken to this seventh observation.

Eighth observation, That *to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,* is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. So the text tells us, that this faith gives us life: *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*; that is, as I explained this phrase in the opening of the text, that upon these terms and conditions ye might be made partakers of all those blessings and benefits, which Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath purchased, which are here set forth under the name of life; it being usual in the phrase of scripture to set forth to us those things which are most excellent and desirable, by life, which men value above all other things. Now, the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are,

1. Regeneration; under which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification.

2. Justification; by which I cannot find that the scripture means any more than pardon or remission of sins.

3. Eternal

2. Eternal life; and this I think is principally, though not ſolely intended here in the text, as I have ſhewn, by comparing the text with other parallel texts in the ſame evangeliſt. John iii. 15. *That whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life.* I ſay, I think eternal life is here principally intended, though this ſuppoſe the other, regeneration, and juſtification, before we can attain it, which may alſo very well be included here in the term *life*. My reaſons are theſe.

1. Becauſe I find in ſcripture, that regeneration and juſtification are expreſſed by the name of *life*. Rom. vi. 4. our regeneration is called *newneſs of life*, becauſe before we were *dead in ſins and treſpaſſes;* and Rom. v. 18. juſtification is called *juſtification of life*, becauſe while our ſins are unpardoned, and we are under the ſentence of condemnation, we are dead in law; but being juſtified and pardoned, we are, as it were, reſtored to life again.

2. Becauſe in the phraſe of ſcripture we are ſaid to be regenerate, and ſanctified, and juſtified by faith, as well as ſaved. 1 John v. 1. *He that believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God.* Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;* ſpeaking of the new life of ſanctification. And Col. ii. we are ſaid to be *riſen with Chriſt*, that is, born to a new life, *by the faith of the operation of God, that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead;* and *to be juſtified by faith*, in innumerable places. So that it is very probable upon theſe accounts, that the evangeliſt here, when he ſays, *that believing you might have life in his name*, doth intend to take in regeneration and juſtification, as well as eternal life, which is the conſummation of all the bleſſings of the goſpel. I come now to the obſervation, *viz.*

That this faith of the goſpel, which I have deſcribed, is truly and properly a ſanctifying, and juſtifying, and ſaving faith.

I. I ſhall ſhew that it is properly a ſanctifying faith.

II. A juſtifying and ſaving faith.

I. It is truly ſanctifying. I know that this term of a ſanctifying faith is not much in uſe among divines,

and therefore it may seem a little more strange: but they might have used it if they had pleased, for it is every whit as proper to call faith *sanctifying*, as *justifying* or *saving*. It is true indeed, this express term of *sanctifying faith* is no where in scripture; no more are the very terms of *justifying* and *saving faith*: but we are said *to be justified* and *saved by faith* in scripture which is as much as if the terms had been used. And we are said also to be *sanctified by faith*, as well as *justified* and *saved*. Acts xv. 9. our hearts are said to be *purified by faith*. And so likewise, our *victory over the world*, that is, our conquering and subduing of our covetous, and ambitious, and sensual lusts and desires, are in a peculiar manner ascribed to this faith, which I have described. 1 John v. 4. 5. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

II. That this faith is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. I put these, *justification* and *salvation* together, partly because they are of the same consideration, as to the influence which faith hath upon them; and the latter follows upon the former; for if we be *justified by faith*, that is, have our sins pardoned, by the same act of faith we are saved from hell, and consequently made capable of eternal life; I say, by the very same act of faith that we obtain the pardon of our sins, we are saved from hell, that is, the punishment due to sin; for pardon removes the guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment: and partly because I find the scripture useth them promiscuously. When St James disputes about justification by faith, he useth the term of being *saved by faith*, Jam. ii. 14. *Can faith save him?* Sometimes of being *justified*, ver. 24. *So that a man is not justified by faith only.*

In speaking to this proposition, that the faith of the gospel, which I have described, is properly justifying and saving faith, I shall do these six things.

1. Shew that justification in scripture signifies no more than the pardon and remission of sins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon.

3. That

3. That the influence that the faith of the goſpel, hich I have deſcribed, hath upon the pardon of ſin, this, that it is the whole and entire condition requid on our parts, upon the performance of which God ıth promiſed to pardon our ſins, and to ſave us.

4. That the ſcripture, where it treats of juſtification y faith, ſpeaks of this faith which I have deſcribed, and o other.

5. That no metaphorical deſcriptions of juſtifying ith are allowable, any further than as they ſerve to iluſtrate and make clear the plain and ſimple notion of ıe thing. For if metaphors once come to be inſiſted n, and ſtrained, and conſequences come to be drawn om them, and doctrines founded, and theories built pon them, they are of very ill conſequence, and ſerve o no other purpoſe but to blind and obſcure the plain nd ſimple notions of things, and to ſeduce and miſlead he underſtandings of men, and to multiply controverıes without end.

And I the rather take notice of this abuſe of metahors upon this ſubject, becauſe I do not know any oher head of divinity which hath ſuffered ſo much by hem as the doctrine of juſtifying faith; whereby the lain truth hath been very much obſcured, and occaſion iniſtered to many endleſs diſputes.

6. That if this plain and ſimple notion of juſtifying aith were admitted, it would ſuperſede all thoſe controverſies about juſtification, which have ſo much troubled the church. Theſe particulars I ſhall by God's aſſiſtance ſpeak to, not out of a mind to oppoſe and contradict others; (what a pitiful deſign is that! and how much below one that is to ſpeak to men, in the name and fear of God!), but out of a hearty deſire to bring the truth to light, and to contribute ſomething to the clearing of that, which is of ſo great importance and concernment to Chriſtian religion.

1. That juſtification of a ſinner in ſcripture ſignifies no more than the pardon of ſin. That there are ſeveral acceptations of the word juſtification in the New Teſtament, I deny not. Sometimes it ſignifies approbation in general of a thing, or perſon. So the word is uſed, Luke vii. 29. *And all the people that heard him, and*

the publicans, juſtified God, being baptized with the ba-
tiſm of John. Juſtified God; how is that? that i
they approved and followed his counſel, as appears ev
dently by the oppoſition in the next words; *But t*
Phariſees and lawyers rejected the counſel of God again
themſelves, being not baptized of him. Thoſe that *reject*
ed the counſel of God, are oppoſed to thoſe that *juſtifie*
God. And ſo at ver. 35. *But wiſdom is juſtified*
her children, that is, is approved. And ſo very probabl
it may be underſtood in the parable of the Phariſee an
the publican, *I tell you, this man went down to his hou*
juſtified rather than the other; that is, of the two, Go
did rather approve of his humble carriage, than th
Phariſee's proud and inſolent behaviour. Sometimes i
ſignifies any proof or declaration of a thing. So Rom
iii. 4. *Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it i*
written, That thou mightſt be juſtified in thy ſayings, an
mightſt overcome when thou art judged; that is, that al
thy words or promiſes might be proved and declared t
be true, and that thou mayſt prevail whenever thou
art impleaded by men of unfaithfulneſs and unrighteouſ
neſs. And ſo 1 Tim. iii. 16. Chriſt is ſaid to b
juſtified in the Spirit; that is, by the teſtimony of th
Spirit concerning him; as alſo by the miracles whic
he wrought by the Holy Ghoſt, and the miraculou
gifts of the Spirit which were poured forth on the a
poſtles, he was proved and declared to be the true Meſ
ſias, and the Son of God. And this phraſe of Chriſt'
being juſtified by the Spirit, ſeems to be of the ſame ſenſe
with that expreſſion, Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the*
Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs,
by the reſurrection from the dead; that is, he was evi-
dently proved to be the Son of God, by the great mi-
racle of his reſurrection, which was wrought by the
power of the Holy Ghoſt. But moſt frequently, to
juſtify in ſcripture, ſignifies to pardon.

Thus the word *juſtify* doth ſignify variouſly, ac-
cording to the ſubject or matter it is applied to: but
when it is applied to a ſinner, it ſignifies nothing elſe
but pardon of his ſin. Nor can I poſſibly apprehend
what other notion men can frame to themſelves of a ſin-
ner's being juſtified, diſtinct from pardon and remiſſion.

Indeed,

ideed, if a perſon be not really guilty, that is, unjuſtly ccuſed of a crime, he may be ſaid to be juſtified, when e is cleared from the charge and accuſation which is rought againſt him: but if a man be guilty, he can- ot otherwiſe be ſaid to be juſtified than by having the uilt removed; that is, by being pardoned. And that he ſcripture underſtands the ſame thing by juſtification, nd pardon, or remiſſion of ſins, is, I think, very evident om theſe two texts, Acts xiii. 38. 29. *That through his man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins;* hat is, in and through Jeſus Chriſt the way of pardon nd forgiveneſs is declared; *and by him, all that believe re juſtified from all things, from which ye could not be uſtified by the law of Moſes;* that is, according to this declaration, all that do believe, are by him, that is, by he virtue of his ſacrifice, acquitted and cleared from he guilt of all thoſe ſins, for which there is no way of expiation provided by the law of Moſes, that is, of preſumptuous ſins, for which there was no ſacrifice, but he man was to be cut off. Now, if the meaning of his text be this, that in and through Chriſt the way of pardon and forgiveneſs is declared, and accordingly all that do believe in him are pardoned, then to be juſtified and pardoned are all one in this place; but this is the meaning of the text, if by the phraſe of being *juſtified from all things, from which we could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes*, be meant the pardoning of ſuch ſins and tranſgreſſions, for which by the law of Moſes there was no way of expiation; but this muſt of neceſſity be the meaning of this phraſe; for what are thoſe things, for which it is ſaid, *we could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes*, but ſinful tranſgreſſions and violations of the law? and how can a man be ſaid to be *juſtified from any ſin and tranſgreſſion*, otherwiſe than by the pardon and forgiveneſs of it? The other text is Rom. iv. 6. 7. 8. *Even as David alſo deſcribeth the bleſſedneſs of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteouſneſs without works, ſaying, Bleſſed are they whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered; bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute ſin.* The man unto whom *God imputeth righteouſneſs*, is the man whom *God juſtifies*. Now, how does David deſcribe the bleſ-

ſedneſs

sedness of the man whom *God justifies?* Thus, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*, which is a metaphorical expression of the same thing, *covering of sin* being the pardoning of it. From whence I reason, if according to the Apostle those propositions be equivalent, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven*, and, *Blessed is the man whom God justifies*, then according to the Apostle, justification and forgiveness of sins are all one: but those propositions are equivalent if the Apostle cite the text out of the Psalms pertinently.

2. That faith can in no tolerable propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon, and consequently not of our justification. An instrument is something subordinate to the principal efficient cause and made use of by it to produce the effect; and this in natural and artificial causes may be understood; but what notion to have of a moral instrument, I confess I am at a loss. But to bring the business out of the clouds we may thus conceive of the pardon of sin. God, in the gospel, hath entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with sinners; one of the benefits promised by God in the covenant, is pardon of sin. The conditions upon which we shall be made partakers of the benefit, are comprehended in this one word, *faith*, which signifies the whole of the Christian religion, *viz.* such an effectual assent to the revelation of the gospel, as doth produce repentance, and sincere obedience, and a trust and confidence in Christ alone for salvation. The procuring or meritorious cause of this benefit, *viz.* the pardon of our sins, is the death of Christ, which is called his blood or sacrifice. The principal efficient cause of our pardon is God, in the sentence of the law, or, which is all one, in the tenor of this covenant, declaring us pardoned upon these terms and conditions. Now, how can faith, which is an act on our parts, and the condition to be performed by us, be said to be an instrument in the hand of God of our pardon? unless men will think fit to call a condition an instrument, which, I think, no propriety of language will allow.

I should now proceed to the third particular which I proposed, but shall refer that to my next discourse on this argument.

SER-

SERMON CCXXVII.

Of justifying faith.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The third sermon on this text.

THE observation I am discoursing upon is this, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. I have entered upon the latter part of the observation, *viz.* to shew that this is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. In speaking to which, I proposed to shew six things.

1. That justification in scripture signifies no more but the pardon and remission of sins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon. Thus far I have gone, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.* to shew,

3. That the influence which faith hath upon the pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition, required in the gospel, of our pardon, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon sin; which appears thus. All the conditions the gospel requires on our part in order to pardon, may be reduced to these four heads.

(1.) An assent to the truth of the gospel.

(2.) A trust and confidence in Christ as our only Saviour.

(3.) Repentance from dead works.

(4.) Sincere

(4.) Sincere obedience and holiness of life. But I have already proved at large, that all these are comprehended in the New-Testament notion of faith, which signifies the whole of Christian religion. And that repentance and obedience are conditions of our pardon and consequently of our justification, appears from the texts. Acts iii. 19. *Repent therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.* Doth not this imply that upon condition we do repent and be converted, God will pardon our sins? 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins,* (that is, with a resolution to leave them; as is said elsewhere, *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins), he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Matth. vi. 14. 15. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* And to the same purpose, Matth. xviii. 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* Luke vi. 37. *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* Luke xi. 4. *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* Where doth the scripture make any thing more plainly a condition of pardon than it here does our forgiving of others? upon condition of the performance whereof he promises to forgive us; and without which he threatens not to forgive us. I know not what a condition is, if it be not that which if we perform, we shall receive the benefit promised; if we do not, we shall fall short of it.

4. That the scripture, where it speaks of justification by faith, speaks of this faith, and no other, of such a faith as takes in the whole of Christian religion. The principal places where the scripture designedly treats of justification by faith, are the third and fourth chapters of the epistle to the Romans, the second and third to the Galatians; and the second to St James. In the Romans and Galatians, St Paul doth plainly oppose faith to the law, and the righteousness of it to the works of the law; and it will clearly appear to any one that will carefully read over these discourses of St Paul's, that

hat by faith is meant the dispensation of the gospel, nd by the law the Mosaical administration; and the esult of all those discourses is, that men are not justified by performing the works which the legal dispensation required; but by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel. And this is agreeable to what he says, Acts xiii. 38. 39. *Through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

It is true likewise, that the Apostle, in the epistle to the Romans, doth not only dispute against those who simply contended for justification by the legal dispensation; but were fallen also into the gross error and mistake, that they did merit justification and pardon at God's hand, which is impossible: for pardon is free, and of grace, or else it is not pardon. Therefore the Apostle asserts, that we are so justified by faith, that neither our assent to the gospel, nor our obedience to the commands of it, do merit this at God's hands; for this would directly contradict justification by the faith of the gospel. For how can any man possibly think, that he merits pardon by his believing and obeying the gospel, when this is part of the gospel which we believe, that Christ died for our sins, and purchased our pardon at so dear a rate? which had been very unjust, if we ourselves could have done any thing to have merited it.

And that faith is taken for the revelation of the gospel, in opposition to the legal administrations, will appear by considering these texts: Gal. iii. 22. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law;* by which the Apostle plainly means this, that before the revelation of the gospel to the world, we were under the legal administration; for he adds afterwards, *We were shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed;* and what is *the faith that should afterwards be revealed,* but the gospel? which in the fulness of time was to be revealed to the world, till which time we were held under the dispensation of the law: and ver. 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith;* that is, the law was a discipline preparatory for the gospel, that when that came, we might

might be justified by it: and ver. 25. *But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster,* is, after the gospel was revealed, we were set free the severe and harsh dispensation of the law; and assent and submission to that revelation, is that whe we are said to be justified. Rom. iii. 22. *Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ,* tha by the gospel, *unto all, and upon all them that believe.* ver. 26. *That he might be just, and the justifier of which believeth in Jesus;* τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, *the just of him* that yields assent and submission to the gospe Christ. And this faith is said to be *imputed to us righteousness,* chap. iv. 24. *But for us also, to whom shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up sus our Lord from the dead;* that is, if we assent submit to the revelation of the gospel, which God h confirmed by that eminent miracle of raising up Ch from the dead.

St James tells us most expressly, that the faith wh justifies doth contain obedience in it: and if it do n it is dead, and false, and ineffectual to all purposes pardon and salvation: and that if any man pretend faith, and that faith be destitute of the proper and nuine effects of true faith, it will be unprofitable him, and not at all avail to his justification and sal tion. The sum of his discourse is, that the faith wh justifies and saves us, must not only be a bare assent the understanding to the truths of the gospel; t must include in it obedience to all the commands the gospel; and if it does not, it does no more deser the name of faith, than good words to a man in wa deserve the name of charity. Chap. ii. ver. 14. 1 16. 17. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a m say he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith sa him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of da food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, ye warmed, and filled: notwithstanding ye give them n those things which are needful to the body: what doth profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, b ing alone.* And to this purpose he instanceth in Abra ham, and Rahab, and shews that the faith which ju stified them, did include in it the effects of faith, *viz.* obedienc

ɔedience and good works, ver. 21. 22. *Was not Abra-m our father justified by works, when he had offered ɪac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought th his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* nd ver. 23. *And the scripture was fulfilled, which ith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him r righteousness.* But if Abraham were justified by ɔrks, *viz.* by offering up his son upon the altar, in ɔedience to God's command, as he says before, at the st verse, how was *the scripture fulfilled, which saith, t faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, that is, was justified by faith; unless faith take in the works obedience? From whence he concludes, *that by rks a man is justified, and not by faith only*; not by a ked assent to the truth, but by such a faith as includes ɔedience; which he farther illustrates by a similitude the last verse; *As the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is dead also.* A living faith doth truly contain obedience in it, as a living body con-ins a spirit.

And those distinctions which are commonly applied this discourse of St James, do not clear it, but con-adict the express design of it. Some say that *fides quæ viva justificat; sed non qua viva:* "Faith which is living justifies; but not as a living faith." Others y, which is much to the same purpose, *fides justificat ne operibus; sed fides sine operibus non justificat:* "Faith justifies without works; but faith without works does not justify." But St James says expressly, that *we e justified by works.* How then is that true, that *faith stifies without works?* And he says that works are ɪe life of our faith. How then can any man say, that *ough faith justifies, yet not as it is a living faith;* when e are justified by that which is the very life of our ith, and that is obedience?

There are two other distinctions whereby men en-eavour to elude this plain text, which I did not men-on before; that *faith justifies the person, and works stify the faith,* and that this is St James's meaning. ut what ground for this, when the text speaks expres-of the person being justified by works, as well as ith? *Was not Abraham our father justified by works?*

ver. 21. *You see then that by works a man is justified, a not by faith only.* Ver. 24. *Likewise also was not Rah the harlot justified by works?* What colour is here for a man to say, that St James does not speak of the jus fication of the person by works, but of the faith? what necessity of framing this distinction, but only serve an opinion? But at this rate a man may mainta any thing, though it be never so contrary to scriptur and elude the clearest text in the Bible.

The other distinction, which is much to the same sen is, that the Apostle doth not here speak of a real jus fication before God, but a declarative justification befo men. But, according to this, what sense can be ma of verse 14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, if a m say, I have faith, and have not works? Can faith sa him?* That is, according to this explication, can fai without works save him before men?

And this doth not contradict St Paul, who sait Gal. ii. 16. that *a man is not justified by the works the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.* For how d this, that we are justified, not by the legal dispensatio but by the faith of the gospel, which includes obedien and good works, contradict what St James says, th we are not justified by a bare assent to the truth of t gospel, but by obedience to the commands of it? A I do not see that upon the contrary supposition, v that the faith of the gospel doth not include obedien in it, it is possible to reconcile these two apostl Suppose this was St Paul's meaning, that *we are ju fied by faith*, as the only condition and instrument, c it what they will, of our justification; but not by ol dience or good works, as a condition of our justific tion; by what kind of comment can St James's wo be brought to this sense? What man would allow th those words at the 21st verse, *Was not Abraham our ther justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son u the altar*, should be explained by this sense? Was Abraham, when, in obedience to God's command, had offered his son upon the altar, and upon this act obedience was justified, was not he justified by fa only, and not by any work or act of obedience?

th

nat those words at the 24th verse, *Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*, should be nterpreted, Ye see then that by faith only a man is ustified, and not by works? and unless they be thus nterpreted, they are not to be reconciled with the ense of St Paul's words, which many fasten upon them : ut if St Paul's words be taken in the most plain and bvious sense they are capable of, *viz.* that *we are not justified by the works of the law*, that is, by performing the works required by the legal dispensation; *but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, that is, by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel ; we do not strain St James's words, to reconcile him with St Paul.

And thus I have shewn; that where the scripture speaks of justification by faith, it speaks of this faith which I have described. I add, and of no other; not of a bare appropriation of the grace and mercy of the gospel ; that is, in plain English, this is not justifying faith, to believe that I am pardoned and justified, nor to have a firm assurance of this. For if we be justified by faith, we must believe before we can be justified; but if this be justifying faith, to believe, or be assured we are justified, we must be justified before we believe; or else when we believe that we are justified, we must believe that which is not true. Nor is this justifying faith, to lay hold of the righteousness and merits of Christ for the pardon of our sins; that is, to trust and confide only in that, as the meritorious cause of our pardon. For though this be part of the notion of justifying faith, it is not all ; though this be one of the terms or conditions upon which we are justified; yet it is not the whole and entire condition ; which, besides this, takes in an assent to the whole gospel, repentance from dead works, and obedience to all the precepts of the gospel. And if any man can produce any one text which saith, that the faith which justifies, consists only in a trust and confidence in the merits of Christ, for the pardon of sin, or any thing to this effect, I will be most ready publicly to acknowledge my error : but if no body can do this, I shall beg their pardon if I do continue still of the same mind I was.

I.

I have now done with the fourth thing I propound: but before I speak to the two heads which remain I must remove an objection or two, that my former discourse may seem liable to.

Object. 1. To make obedience a condition of pardon, seems to take away the freeness of God's grace in pardoning sinners.

1. God's grace in pardoning a sinner is said to be free, not because it is not suspended upon any condition; for the scripture tells us plainly, that it is upon the condition of faith, and repentance, and forgiving others, and the like; but it is free, because God was pleased freely to give his Son to die for our sins, and to accept of his sacrifice for the expiation of them, and to impose easy and reasonable conditions upon us, in order to our enjoying of this benefit; and upon such conditions, though they have nothing of virtue or merit, of any natural or moral efficacy, to deserve, or procure such a benefit as the pardon of our sins, for the sake of his Son, whom he gave to be a ransom for us, to receive us to grace and mercy; and I think this abundantly enough to make our justification very gracious and free, though not absolutely free from all condition.

2. Our salvation is said in scripture to be as free as our justification: we are said *to be saved by grace*, as well as *justified freely by his grace*. But will any man say, that we are saved without any conditions, who reads these texts? *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. If ye walk after the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that he who can understand how we may be saved by grace, though our salvation be suspended upon the condition of faith, repentance, and holiness, and obedience of life, may, if he please, understand how we may be justified freely by God's grace, though it be upon the same conditions. So that if men were not monstrously perverse, it is impossible they should not see the weakness of this objection.

Objection

Objection the second. This is the doctrine of the apists, that obedience and good works are a condition of our justification.

Ans. 1. I am for the doctrine which is evidently contained in scripture, whoever hold it. A man ought not to be frighted out of the truth by any name.

2. But there is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this doctrine. They say, that obedience and good works are not only condition of our justification, but a meritorious cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of merit that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification; and if some also oppose the Papists about good works being a condition, I know nobody that thinks himself obliged to hold every opinion that any Protestant hath maintained against the Papists: and the like I say to the objection of Socinianism and Arminianism, and a hundred names more, if people think fit to fasten them upon it.

And now I might compare this doctrine with the contrary. All that may be said against it is, that it diminisheth the grace of God: but that I have shewn it doth not; but then it hath these advantages. It is, so far as I can judge, (and mine own judgment must govern me), much more plainly contained in scripture, and it is a doctrine more according to godliness; it tends more to quicken men to obedience and a holy life, to believe that they cannot have their sins otherwise pardoned, than to believe that they may have their sins pardoned without obedience and a holy life; and if obedience be not a necessary condition of pardon, it is plain that men may be pardoned without it. For example, if a man promise me a thousand pounds, only upon this condition, that I will believe him, and trust him, but without any condition of doing what he shall command me, and he shall declare thus much to me; if I can trust this man's word, I need not doubt but I shall have the sum promised; though I should disobey him in every thing that he commanded me to do: and this is just the case; and if it be, it is no wonder that men are so loath to disbelieve this pleasant opinion, which gives men comfortable hopes of the pardon of their sins, up-

on such easy terms. Not that I am so uncharitable as not to acknowledge that our worthy and excellent divines, who have been of this judgment, have always prest the necessity of holiness and obedience: but I am sorry they could not do it with so good advantage according to their principles, the natural consequences of them tending to licentiousness, and a neglect of the precepts of the gospel; to which purpose they have been sadly abused by several libertines in these and former times, ever since Luther's days, and I could never yet see how Antinomianism could solidly be confuted upon those principles.

3. That no metaphorical descriptions of justifying faith are allowable any farther than as they serve to illustrate the plain, and proper, and simple notion of faith. My meaning is, he that would teach men what faith is, he must first acquaint men with the thing, and describe it in as proper and simple words as can be, and not by figurative and metaphorical phrases. Indeed, after a man hath delivered the simple notion of a thing in proper words, he may afterwards illustrate it by metaphors: but then these are not to be insisted upon, and strained to the utmost extent of the metaphor, beyond what the true notion of the thing will bear: for if consequences once come to be drawn from metaphors, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, instead of illustrating the thing, they blind and obscure it, and serve to no other purpose, but to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end; and, as I told you before, I do the rather take notice of this abuse of metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the doctrine of justifying faith, whereby the plain truth hath been very much darkened, and occasion ministered to many endless disputes. But this will best appear by some particular instances. Justifying faith hath usually been described by these metaphors, *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, *apprehending*, and *laying hold*, and *applying* of Christ, *receiving* of Christ, and *coming to him*. Now, concerning these, I shall briefly speak these or four things.

(1.) That

(1.) That none of these metaphors, except the two last, *receiving of Christ*, and *coming to him*, are any where used in scripture, to describe justifying faith by; and therefore there is no reason why they should be so much used and insisted on. Let any man shew me where justifying faith is any where in scripture described by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, by *apprehending*, and *laying hold*, and *applying* of him.

(2.) If these metaphors were explained and turned into proper and plain words, they can signify nothing else, but that faith which I have been all this while describing. For what can any man understand by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, but to trust in him as the author of our eternal salvation? under which word all the benefits which Christ hath purchased for us are comprehended. Now, can any man be said to trust in Christ, as the author of his salvation, otherwise than by assenting to the truth of the gospel, and complying with the terms and conditions of it? And what can any man understand by *apprehending*, *and laying hold on*, and *applying* Christ, other than this, to make use of him for all those ends and purposes for which God hath appointed him? And what those are the scripture tells us, that *he is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

(3.) As for those scripture-metaphors of receiving Christ, and coming to him, the scripture useth them but sparingly, and I dare say, for once that it useth these metaphors, it doth twenty times describe faith by plain and proper words; and where it does make use of these metaphors, it doth sufficiently explain them. So you find coming to Christ is explained by learning of him: Matth. xi. 28. 29. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* That is, come to me as scholars and disciples to be taught by me; in order to which, it is requisite that we should believe him. *Oportet discentem credere:* "He that will "learn, must believe him that teacheth him," and trust his skill. And so for receiving him, lest the metaphor should seduce men, St John had no sooner used it, but he

he tells what he means by it. John i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;* that is, believed him to be the person promised to be the Messias, and Saviour of the world; as appears by the opposition in the verse before, *He came to his own, and his own received him not;* that is, rejected him, did not own him to be the true Messias. But now, if we will strain such a metaphor as this beyond the intention of it, and because *believing* is called a *receiving* of Christ, and we receive things with the hand, and the hand is an instrument, will from hence infer, that faith is an instrument of our justification; what may not men make of the scripture at this rate?

(4.) I will add this concerning scripture-metaphors in general, that where the scripture useth metaphors which were very familiar in those languages in which the scripture was writ, and well understood by those who spoke that language, but are very obscure and uncouth to us, and not at all used in our language, as most of the scripture-metaphors are, the proper work of a minister is not to insist in such cases upon scripture-metaphors, to darken his discourse by them, but to explain them, and make them intelligible, to translate them into English, and instead of them to use such phrases as people are more familiarly acquainted with, and are used in our own language. For a man may be a barbarian that speaks to people in unknown phrases and metaphors as well as *he that speaks in an unknown tongue*; and the very same reason that obligeth us to put the scripture into a known language, doth oblige men to explain the doctrines contained in it by such phrases and metaphors as are known and used in that language.

(5.) That if this plain and simple notion of justifying faith were admitted, it would supersede all those controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the reformed churches. Those who have been curious to inquire into these matters, have reckoned up at least twenty several opinions among the Protestant concerning justifying faith. I do not desire to acquaint myself with those differences; he that would know what justification and justifying faith are, shall

soone

oner come to understand the nature of them by dili-nt reading of the scriptures, than by reading over all ie controversial writings of divines about them; and men would but content themselves with those plain id simple descriptions which the scripture gives us of ith, there could not be any great difference about it; is would cut off most of those disputes which have en commenced upon metaphors, and figurative speech-. And here I had thought to have descended to a rticular consideration of the controversies about justi-ing faith, but I am weary of the work, and there-re shall only make some brief reflections upon this hole discourse, and then apply it to our own use, ut this, God willing, the next opportunity.

SERMON CCXXVIII.

The condition of the gospel-covenant, and the merit of Christ, consistent.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The fourth sermon on this text.

I Have, in my former discourses on these words, treated largely of the nature of Christian faith, particularly as it sanctifies, justifies, and saves men. All hat I farther propose is, to make some reflections upn this whole discourse, particularly that which relates o justifying faith, and then apply all to our own use.

I have already taken notice of two objections, to which my discourse may seem liable; and if yet there remain any prejudice upon any man's spirit against this octrine, I would desire such calmly to consider it, and he agreeableness of it, not to the opinions of men, but to

to the word of God, and the suitableness of it to the gre
design of Christian religion, every where expressed
the gospel, which is to bring men to holiness and ob
dience. And what argument and consideration can
more powerful to take men off from sin, and to exc
them to the practice of holiness, than this, that repe
tance and obedience are an indispensable condition
our justification and pardon? And this is the ve
point in difference, whether the gospel do not make r
pentance and obedience conditions of our pardon a
justification, as well as an assent to the truth of the g
spel, and a trust in Christ as the meritorious cause
our salvation. That they are, I have endeavoured
prove from scripture; and for the farther clearing
it, I desire that the nature of the gospel-covenant m
be well considered, which I take to be this. On Go
part there are certain benefits promised, justificati
and pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation. (
our part there are certain conditions required before
can be made partakers of those benefits; these are,
assent to the truth of the gospel, trusting in Christ
our only Saviour, repentance from dead works, and
sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, and a h
life; these make up the whole and entire condition
the gospel, and are often expressed by this one wo
faith, which signifies the whole duty of a Christian; l
cause he that truly believes the gospel, will do wh
ever the gospel requires. And hence it is, that to
a Christian, and to be a believer, are, in the phrase
the New Testament, all one. Now, the matter in co
troversy is plainly this; whether this whole condition
required of us in order to our pardon and justificatio
as well as in order to our salvation. That repentan
and obedience, and holiness of life, are conditions
our salvation, I think is universally agreed. I am s
it is clearly expressed in these two texts, *Christ is*
author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, H
v. 9. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* H
xii. 14. And that the conditions of our justification a
savation are the same, I think it every whit as cl
both from scripture, and from the general acknowle
ment of divines by necessary consequence. From scri
tu

ire, St James says, that the same thing that justi-
es us, saves us: for when he disputes, whether we
re justified by faith only, or by faith and works, he
ith this expression, *What doth it profit, my brethren,*
hough a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can
ith save him? From whence the inference is plain,
hat upon the very same condition that we are justified,
ve are saved. And it is evident by necessary conse-
quence from the general acknowledgment of divines;
or I think this is universally agreed by divines, that
whatever puts a man into a state of justification and
pardon, puts a man into a state of salvation; and if this
e true, it necessarily follows, that the conditions of our
ustification and salvation are the same: and if assent to
he truth of the gospel, and trust in Christ as our only
Saviour, be the only conditions of our justification, then
they are the only conditions of our salvation; and re-
pentance and obedience are not conditions of our sal-
vation: but if they be conditions of our salvation, then
they are of our justification. And I will be bold to say,
that this hath as much of demonstration in it, as any
thing in divinity is capable of; and I wonder extreme-
ly how any man, that considers the nature of the go-
spel-covenant, can imagine that we should be made
partakers of any blessing or benefit promised in the co-
venant, without performing the whole condition of the
covenant.

And now, if any man ask, *Cui bono?* To what end is
all this? Suppose it be true, to what purpose is it to a-
waken differences, and stir up controversies about these
matters? In order to these two ends, which I take to
be very considerable.

1. That we may be able to answer the Papists, who
charge us with Solifidianism; as if we were of this o-
pinion, that if a man do but trust in Christ, that is,
be but confidently persuaded that he will save him, and
pardon him, that is sufficient; and consequently, he
that is thus persuaded, need not take any further care
of his salvation, but may live as he list: and I do not
see how this can be avoided; especially if this be true,
which our divines universally assert, that whatever puts
a man into a justified state, puts him into a state of sal-
vation;

vation; I say, I do not see how this charge can be voided, unless we own holiness and obedience to conditions of our justification, as well as trust in Chri I know no other middle way between Popery and A tinomianism. But,

2. Which is more considerable, without this we ca give no satisfactory and reasonable account of our rel gion to a Heathen. Suppose a Heathen should say thus Your religion gives a very good account of the corru tion and sinfulness of mankind, and hath provided very probable remedy for the expiation of it, by th death of the Son of God: but this seems to me ver unreasonable, and to contradict the most natural notion that we have of God's justice and holiness, that h should pardon men, as you say he does, though the do not repent of their sins, nor are resolved to leav them, nay, though they be resolved to go on in a wic ked course. Did ever any wise prince pardon a traito upon these terms? But whoever says that repentance and a sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, ar not the condition of our pardon, says, that God wil pardon men without repentance, though they are not at all sorry for what they have done, nor resolved to change their course: for that is a condition without which a thing cannot be; and if repentance be not a condition of pardon, a man may be pardoned without it. And if this be true, Christianity is the most lewd and senseless doctrine in the world. For what can be a greater encouragement to sin than this, to tell men that they may be pardoned without repentance? that is, though they live in sin, and continue so to do. Paganism never taught any such thing. Nay, they may add farther, that this which you teach as the doctrine of your religion, seems expressly contrary to your own books, which you say contain your religion. Does not the Bible say, that *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy?* And doth not this plainly imply, that repentance is a condition of pardon? *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Doth it not say, that *if you forgive not men their tresp-*

passes,

sses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you? n any words more plainly express a condition than de do? How should we be able to defend our religion ainst such an assault, unless we disclaim this charge, d tell them plainly, and without a distinction, that our igion teacheth that repentance, and resolution of holiss, and obedience, are conditions of our pardon and tification? I would to God men would consult the nour of Christianity, and when they hold any opini-, they would not consider the interest of a party, but e universal concernment of the Christian religion. If had to deal with subtile Heathens, as the primitive thers of the church had, we should see a necessity of ying aside such unreasonable opinions. I would fain ve any man shew any one clear passage out of any of e ancient fathers and writers concerning Christian reigion, which says, that trust in Christ for salvation is e only condition of our justification, and that repentice and obedience are not; or that explains justification by faith alone, in this sense. I know it is usually id, the ancient fathers and Christians were ignorant of e doctrine of justification in a great measure, and new very little of the mystery of the gospel. I know t what they mean by mystery: but I am sure they fined Christian religion better, and gave a more reanable and satisfactory account of it, than any of those , who are so apt to slight them.

The use of this doctrine is as follows.

First, To persuade men to place all their hope and nfidence of salvation in Jesus Christ the Son of God; at is, to believe that through the alone merit of his ath and sufferings, God is reconciled to us, and that ly upon the account of the satisfaction which he hath ade to divine justice, we are restored to the favour of od, and our sins are pardoned to us, and we have a tle to eternal life. Not but that there are conditions quired on our part, to make us capable of these benets, faith and repentance, and sincere obedience and olineſs of life, without which we shall never be made rtakers of them: but that the satisfaction of Christ is e only meritorious cause of these blessings. And to per-

suade men to the belief of this, I shall endeavour to
tisfy them of these two things.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these bless
for us.

II. That he only hath done it. The first of th
propositions is directly levelled against the Socinians: t
second against the Papists. I shall speak but briefly
them.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these bless
for us: and this being purely matter of revelation,
are apt to rely upon scripture only for the proof of
Matth. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be minister
unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom
many,* λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, *a price of redemption,* inste
of that which should have been paid by us. John vi. 5
*And the bread which I shall give, is my flesh, which
will give for the life of the world.* John x. 11. Christ
called *the good shepherd that lays down his life for his she
John xv. 12. 12. This is my commandment, that ye l
one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath
man than this, that a man lay down his life for his frien
Matth. xxvi. 28. For this is my blood of the new tes
ment, which is shed for many, for the remission of s
Rom. v. 6. For when we were yet without strength,
due time Christ died for the ungodly.* 1 Cor. xv. 3.
*I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also receiv
how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptu
2 Cor. v. 14. 15. For the love of Christ constraineth
because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then w
all dead: and that he died for all, that they which li
should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto
which died for them, and rose again.* Eph. i. 7. *In wh
we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness
sins, according to the riches of his grace.* Col. i. 20.
22. *And (having made peace through the blood of
cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by h
I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in h
ven. And you that were sometime alienated, and enem
in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconci
in the body of his flesh through death, to present you h
and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.* 1 Thess
9. 10. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obt
salvat*

ration by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. Heb. 9. *That he by the grace of God should taste death for ery man.* Heb. ix. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. *But Christ being ne an high priest of good things to come, by a greater d more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and ves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy ce, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the lood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprin-ng the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; o much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the ernal Spirit offered himself with spot unto God, purge ur conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? nd for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testa-nt, that by means of death, for the redemption of the ansgressions that were under the first testament, they hich are called, might receive the promise of eternal in-eritance.* And ver. 25. 26. 27. 28. *Nor yet that he ould offer himself often, as the high priest entered into holy place every year with blood of others; (for then ust he often have suffered since the foundation of the orld): but now once in the end of the world, hath he ap-ared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judg-ent: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; nd unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second me, without sin, unto salvation.* Heb. x. 11. 12. *And very priest standeth daily ministering, and offering often-mes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but is man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for e-r sat down at the right hand of God.* 1 Pet. i. 18. 19. *oraſmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with cor-uptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain nversation received by tradition from your fathers; but ith the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blе-ish and without spot.* 1 Pet. ii. 21. 24. *Because Christ lso suffered for us; who his own self bare our sins in his wn body on the tree.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. *For Christ also ath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he ight bring us to God,* 1 John ii. 1. 2. *My little chil-ren, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And f any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Je-*

sus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* 1 John iv. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Rev. v. 9. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* From these and many other texts, it seems to be very plain and evident, that Christ died for our sins, and suffered in our stead, and by the sacrifice of himself hath made an atonement for us, and reconciled us to God, and hath paid a price and ransom for us, and by the merit of his death hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, *and inheritance among them that are sanctified.* And I do not know any doctrine of our religion, that is founded and established upon more and plainer texts, which cannot be understood any other sense, without offering great violence to the first and most obvious meaning of them.

I know the Socinians have framed evasions to all these texts, which I have not time now to produce and examine; nor would it be worth the while. I shall only say this to them in general; that there is no principle of religion so plainly laid down in the whole scripture, but may be overthrown by the same or the like evasions. Suppose Christ had died in our stead, and made satisfaction for sin, and God had intended to declare so much to us; in what plainer, and more express and proper words could he have done it, than the scripture hath already done? If God had said in the scripture expressly that Christ had *died in our room and stead,* and had *satisfied for our sins*; these very expressions, by the same arts of interpretation, might have been strained and wrested to some other sense. So that if God did not intend to express to us by these texts, that *Christ satisfied for the sins of men*; yet they are so obvious to be interpreted to that sense, and so hardly, if at all, capable of any other, that we cannot imagine, without a great reflection upon the wisdom of God, that he should

ould deliver his mind to men in words and expressions
o exceedingly liable to a quite different sense from what
e intended. Besides that there is nothing more un-
easonable than to deny that to be the meaning of
ipture, which if it had been the meaning could not
ave been expressed in plainer and more advantageous
ords; especially when this is done, not in one or two
exts, but very many; and not by one form of expres-
on, but several, and all inclining to the same sense;
nd which is worst of all, this violence is offered to
cripture in a matter which does neither contradict other
exts of scripture, nor the reason of mankind, *viz.* that
ne man should suffer in another's stead, and make sa-
isfaction for the crimes and faults which another hath
ommitted; supposing the party offended be willing to
ccept of the commutation, and the party that suffers in
nother's stead do voluntarily do it.

II. That Christ only hath merited these blessings for
s, and that he had no partner with him in this; or
here is no other hath merited these blessings for us, nor
an we ourselves merit them.

1. No other hath merited these blessings for us. Not
o take notice of what the Papists say of the meritorious-
ess of our works of supererogation, which go into the
reasury of the church, and make up a public stock of
nerit, to be disposed and dealt out by the Pope at his
iscretion; they have, by a most unparallelled blasphe-
my, joined the Virgin Mary with Christ in the work of
our redemption; and some of them have been so impious-
ly bold, as to parallel the virtue of her milk with the
efficacy of Christ's blood. And though Christ say, *that he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him*; yet Bonaventure in his meditations ventures to corrupt the text, by this foolish glos, *Nullus erat tecum. Recte, Domine, sed erat tecum femina*; "Right, Lord, there was no man "with thee, but there was a woman, *viz.* thy mother."

2. Nor can we ourselves do any thing whereby we can merit these blessings at God's hands. Considering that we received our being, and all that we are and have, from God, and upon account of these benefits are obliged to love him and serve him to the utmost; what

a senseless piece of arrogance is it to say, that a creatu can merit any thing at God's hand? Whatever we giv God is of his own, and when we have done all we ca we have done no more than our duty. And can an man challenge any reward for doing what he ought t do? Can any man make satisfaction for a fault that h hath committed, by doing his duty, that is, by not com mitting another? It is a sure rule, *Debitum debito no solvitur.* We are indebted to God by the breach of h law: but we cannot quit this debt, and satisfy for th breach, by not breaking it again, because we owe t God all possible obedience.

Besides that all our obedience is imperfect, and is s far from meriting, that it stands in need of pardon and can a man demerit and merit by the same action Can he who deserves to be punished for an action, be cause he did it no better, deserve to be rewarded for th same action, because he did it so well? And to say tha Christ hath merited that our imperfect obedience shoul merit, either signifies only this, that Christ hath merit ed that our imperfect obedience should be accepted b God, notwithstanding its imperfection; (and this i true, but nothing to the purpose of merit); or else i signifies, that Christ hath merited that that which is n wise meritorious, should be so; that is, that the natur of things should be altered; which is not only false, bu senseless.

Secondly, To persuade us to live as we believe. I we profess to believe the gospel to be true, then let ou hearts and lives be suitable to those truths which w believe. If we believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, we believe the doctrine which he delivered to the world to be from God, and consequently to be true; we believe the precepts of it are holy, and just, and good, and that they are necessary to be observed by us, as being in order to our peace and happiness; we believe that the promises of the gospel are all yea, and amen, and shall every tittle of them be made good; we believe that the threatenings of the gospel shall all punctually be fulfilled. Now, how ought men to live, that believe all this? Having a law given us, which hath the sanction of such promises and threatenings,

threatenings, ought we not to conform our lives to it, and charge ourselves with obedience to all those precepts of piety towards God, and purity and temperance in the government of ourselves, and justice and righteousness in our dealings with others, which are contained in this new law of the gospel? If the gospel hath promised eternal life and happiness to those who do conscientiously abstain from sin, and follow holiness; *having these promises*, ought we not *to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?* If the gospel hath threatened, that, at the end of the world, Christ will *come in flaming fire*, &c. if we believe these things shall be, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?*

I have formerly shewed at large, how unbecoming it is for any man that professeth himself a Christian, to live unsuitably to his profession; that it is the greatest disparagement to the gospel, and the highest reflection upon it that can be; and that it is infinitely dangerous to us; and though these be very proper considerations, yet because I have formerly urged them, I shall not now enforce my exhortation with these arguments; but shall mention two other considerations, and so conclude.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all intents and purposes.

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief is the highway to infidelity and atheism.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all real intents and purposes.

1. It will be ineffectual to give us the reputation of Christians among wise and discerning persons. We profess to believe the gospel; but if we live contrary to it, our profession is *protestatio contra factum*, and therefore not credible; because our actions contradict it. The constant tenor of a man's actions is a more credible and emphatical declaration of the inward sense of his heart, and shews better what the man believes, than the most solemn profession in words. When our words are not confirmed by our actions, they are but an empty sound, and signify nothing. I may allude to that of St Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though a man have all*

all faith, yet if he be destitute of the true effect of faith *charity, he is but as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.* St James doth very well set forth the inefficacy of such a faith, by this similitude, James ii. 15. 16. 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead.* Men are not so easily cozened as we think they are. Discerning men will not be imposed upon, and put off with a formal and empty profession of faith, when there is nothing in our lives to answer it. It is not standing up in the church, and professing that we believe in God and in Jesus Christ, that he was born, and died, and rose again, and at the end of the world will come to judge the quick and the dead, that will persuade men that we are Christians. Men will look into our lives, and examine our actions, and inquire into our conversations: by these they will judge of the truth and reality of our profession. Let us not delude ourselves, and think to pass for Christians upon these terms, among any that know how to make a right judgment of things. We may cozen ourselves; but we cannot cheat others, who are not so partial to us, as we are apt to be to ourselves. It is not our winking, that hinders others from seeing us.

Nay, I go farther, it is not an earnest contending for fundamental articles of our Christian faith, if we live contrary to them, that will satisfy any wise man that we believe them; much less an intemperate zeal for indifferent opinions in religion. Such were the doctrines concerning the necessity on the one hand, and the unlawfulness of circumcision on the other; but the assent to the one opinion or the other in these matters, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love, the new creature, the keeping of the commandments of God,* as the Apostle in several places expresseth it. Men stand much upon the title of orthodox, by which is usually understood, not believing the doctrine of Christ or his apostles, but such opinions as are in vogue among such a party, such systems

systems of divinity as have been compiled in haste by those whom we have in admiration; and whatever is not consonant to these little bodies of divinity, though possibly it agree well enough with the word of God, is error and heresy, and whoever maintains it, can hardly pass for a Christian among some angry and perverse people. I do not intend to plead for any error; but I would not have Christianity chiefly measured by matters of opinion. I know no such error and heresy as a wicked life. That man believes the gospel best who lives most according to it. Though no man can have a worse opinion of the Socinian doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a man should deny the satisfaction of Christ, than believe it, and abuse it to the encouragement of sin. Of the two I have more hopes of him that denies the divinity of Christ, and lives otherwise soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world, than of the man who owns Christ to be the Son of God, and lives like a child of the devil.

2. Such a faith as hath not an answerable life will be ineffectual to the purpose of justification and salvation. So St James tells us, it is *a dead faith, and profits nothing*, that no man is justified by it, nor will it save any man. *Christ is the author of eternal salvtion to them who* so believe his doctrine *as to obey it; he will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance*, not only *to them that do not believe*, but *to them that do not obey the gospel.* It will not be sufficient, at the day of judgment, to plead our profession of faith in Christ, and to say, *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works?* Doing all this in Christ's name, implies that they profess to believe in him; but notwithstanding all this, if they be *workers of iniquity*, Christ will say to such, *Depart from me, I know you not.* If our Saviour makes a true and proper representation of the day of judgment, and the proceedings of it, Matth. xxv. mens faith shall then be tried by the real fruits and effects of it; then the inquiry shall be, how men have lived? what good they have done, or omitted and neglected? and accordingly sentence will be passed upon them. Nay, such a faith is so far from saving, that it will be an aggravation

of

of our condemnation, and sink us the deeper into hell. *There is one that condemneth you, even Jesus in whom you trust.*

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief is the highway to infidelity and atheism, to bring others and ourselves to it.

1. To bring others to infidelity and atheism, and to confirm them in it. What can be a more effectual bar to keep Heathens, and Jews, and Turks from entertaining the gospel? what can be a greater confirmation of them in their infidelity, than so to misrepresent Christian religion to them, as we do by our unsuitable lives? What can be a stronger prejudice against it, to men who do not look narrowly into it, but only see it at a distance, than to see what fruit it produces in the lives of Christians? May they not invert that proverbial speech of our Saviour's, *Does a vine send forth thorns?* If Christianity were such a holy institution, how comes it to pass that Christians are so wicked? If Jesus Christ were so excellent a master, we should see it in his scholars; *si Christus sancta docuisset, Christiani sancte vixissent*, as Salvian speaks. And it is the way to bring men to atheism. What more like to take men off from all religion, than to see the religion which pretends to be the best in the world, represented by the lives of Christians at such a disadvantage, as if it were a barren, and fruitless, and ineffectual thing, and as if they who profess it, did believe it to be a lie, and gave no credit at all to the doctrines of it?

2. It is the way to bring ourselves to infidelity and atheism. As an erroneous judgment and understanding hath usually an evil influence upon mens lives, so much more a vitious and corrupt life hath a bad influence upon mens understandings. It is so uneasy a thing for men to act contrary to their reason, and against the dictates of their understandings, that men, for their own quiet, and in their own defence, will bend their judgments, and make them comply with the interest of their lusts. Mens affections, which way soever they incline, set a bias upon their understandings; and this doth not only proceed from the nature of the thing, but from the just judgment of God. 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11. 12. the Apostle

poſtle tells us, *that thoſe who receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be ſaved; God will ſend them ſtrong deluſions, to believe lies; that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* If men once *have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*, it will not be long before they give over *believing the truth*, becauſe God, by his juſt judgmeut, will give them over to themſelves, to follow the bias of their own corrupt hearts, which inclines them *to believe lies*. Of all perſons in the world, a wicked and unholy Chriſtian is moſt likely to turn a ſpeculative infidel and atheiſt; and none ſo like to fall into this groſs darkneſs, as thoſe who reſiſt and quench ſo great a light as that of the goſpel is, which they profeſs to believe.

SERMON CCXXIX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Chriſtianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

WHoever impartially conſiders the Chriſtian religion, cannot but acknowledge the laws and precepts of it to be ſo reaſonable; and the practice of them ſo evidently to tend not only to the happineſs of particular perſons, but to the peace and welfare of the world; and the promiſes and threatenings of the goſpel, which are the great motives to perſuade men to the obedience of thoſe laws, to be ſo agreeable to the natural hopes and fears which mankind were always

ways poſſeſſed withal; that, upon this conſideration, it might juſtly be expected, that the doctrine of Chriſtianity, upon the firſt publication of it, ſhould have been entertained with a readineſs of mind proportionable to the reaſonableneſs of it.

Or if the bare reaſonableneſs of it be not thought inducement enough, we may eaſily imagine, how God, if he had pleaſed, could, upon the firſt appearance of this religion in the world, have given it ſuch advantages, as would mightily have contributed to the more eaſy reception and entertainment of it. He could have ordered things ſo, that our bleſſed Saviour, the author of this doctrine, ſhould have been, as the Jews expected, a great temporal monarch; he could have raiſed him to that dignity, and have armed him with that authority, as muſt have given him a mighty power and influence over mankind, and would have gained the great, and the wiſe, and the learned, to have been active inſtruments in the propagating of this religion, and in perſuading men to the embracing of it.

But he, *whoſe ways are above our ways, and whoſe thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth*, did not think fit to have it promoted and carried on this way; nay, he ſeems on purpoſe to have ſtripped it of all ſecular advantages, that it might be perfectly free from all ſuſpicion of a worldly intereſt and deſign, and that it might be evident to all the world, that it was a *plant which his own right hand had planted*; and that it did not owe its eſtabliſhment to the authority, and wiſdom, and contrivance of men, but to the power of God, and to the immediate favour and contrivance of heaven.

And now being thus deſtitute of all worldly aſſiſtance, though never ſo reaſonable in itſelf, it was not likely that it ſhould be able with ſucceſs to grapple with the luſts and corruptions of men, to which it was ſo directly oppoſite; nor with the ſtrong prejudices of their education in a contrary religion, which are always hard to be overcome; nor with the temporal intereſts of men, which were all at that time to be renounced and quitted for its ſake; unleſs it had ſome other advantages to make way for it, and to recommend it to the minds of men.

en. For having no secular baits and allurements to mpt men to the profession of it; no earthly contrivance d assistance to support it and bear it out, but, on the ntrary, the most violent and powerful opposition rai- l against it; it was necessary that those who offered it the world, should be able to give credit to it some her way, and to produce very sensible and convincing guments of another kind: otherwise they might have spaired of ever conquering the prejudices of men a- inst it, and of persuading them to embrace that reli- on, which was so apparently contrary both to their clinations and interests.

So that in these circumstances, in order to the full nviction of men, that those who published this doc- ine to them came from God, and were commissioned d sent by him to teach the world, it was very fitting, at God himself should give some remarkable testi- ony to the first preachers of it; and this the text tells us did, by *bearing witness to them, with signs, and won- rs, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

For the better understanding of these words, we shall well to reflect upon the design of this epistle, which as to establish the Jews, who had but newly embraced hristianity, in the stedfast belief and profession of it, otwithstanding the troubles and persecutions which tended it: and to this end the Apostle represents to em, that the gospel was delivered with more authority, d had a greater confirmation given to it, than the law. he law was delivered by angels; but the gospel by e Son of God: and if the contempt of the law was severely punished, what might they expect would be e fate of those who should slight and reject the gospel? *f the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every trans- ression and disobedience received a just recompense of re- ard; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva- on, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was onfirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing em witness, with signs, and wonders, and with divers iracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his wn will;* συνεπιμαρτυρουντος τοῦ Θεοῦ, *God adjoining this arther testimony of signs and wonders.* The apostles estified what they had heard from our Lord; and to

give credit and confirmation to their teſtimony, G was pleaſed to endow them with miraculous gifts; *bare them witneſs with ſigns, and wonders, and miracl* So likewiſe, Acts xiv. 3. it is ſaid, that *God gave t ſtimony to the word of his grace, granting ſigns and wo ders to be done by the apoſtles.* Sometimes there a more words put together, to expreſs the giving of th miraculous power. Acts ii. 22. *Jeſus of Nazareth, a proved of God by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns.* 2 Co xii. 12. St Paul, ſpeaking of himſelf, ſays, *The ſig of an apoſtle were wrought among you, in all patience, ſigns, and wonders, and miracles.* Theſe were the mar of an extraordinary and immediate commiſſion, ſuc as was that of the apoſtles.

It is to no purpoſe nicely to inquire into the diffe ence of theſe words, σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις, *ſign wonders*, and *miracles*, becauſe in all probability the is no difference intended, it being the manner of th Hebrews, when they would expreſs a great thing, a great degree of any thing, to heap ſeveral wor together, ſignifying the ſame thing. So we find, Deu vi. 5. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy hear and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might*; that i greatly, with a very ardent and intenſe degree of a fection. So likewiſe in the text, God is ſaid to *bea witneſs to the apoſtles, with ſigns, and wonders, and m racles;* that is, in a very eminent and extraordinar manner, by great and wonderful miracles.

From theſe words, three things offer themſelves t our conſideration.

Firſt, That miracles are a divine teſtimony given t a perſon or doctrine: *God bearing them teſtimony, b ſigns, and wonders, and miracles.*

Secondly, That God gave this teſtimony to the a poſtles, and firſt preachers of Chriſtianity, in a ver eminent manner; for ſo the phraſe ſignifies, ſo man words being multiplied to expreſs the greatneſs o the thing.

Thirdly, We will conſider the reaſon why miracle are now ceaſed in the church, and have been fo ſeveral ages, ſo that there have been no footſteps o them for a long time.

Firſt,

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine. God is here said *to bear witness to the apostles, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles;* that is, the miracles which God enabled them to work, were an evidence that their doctrine was from God.

And because there is some difficulty in this argument, therefore, that we may the more distinctly understand of what force this argument or testimony of miracles is, to prove the divinity of any person or doctrine, it will be requisite clearly to state these two things.

I. What a miracle is.

II. In what circumstances, and with what limitations, miracles are a sufficient testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. The clearing of these two things shall be my work at this time.

I. What a miracle is. The shortest and plainest description I can give of it, is this, that it is a supernatural effect, evident and wonderful to sense. So that there are two things necessary to a miracle.

1. That it be a supernatural effect.

2. That it be evident and wonderful to sense.

1. That it be a supernatural effect. By a supernatural effect, I mean such an effect, as either in itself, and in its own nature, or in the manner and circumstances of it, exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. For there are some things that are miraculous in themselves; others that are only miraculous in the manner and circumstances of their operation. For instance, the resurrection of one from the dead, is a thing which in itself is supernatural, and an effect above any power that we know of in nature to produce; but the healing of several diseases, and the speaking of languages, are not things which are in themselves, and in their nature supernatural: for we see that they may be acquired by natural skill and industry: but to heal all sorts of diseases in an instant, and by a word, and without the application of natural means; and on a sudden to speak languages which a man never learned; these are things, which though they be not in

their nature, yet in such circumstances as these, they are supernatural.

I say, that a supernatural effect is that which is above any natural power that we know of to produce; by which I do not mean, that miracles are always an immediate effect of the divine power, and consequently that God alone can work them. For angels, good or bad, may do such things as exceed any natural power known to us, and such as we cannot distinguish by any certain marks and characters from those effects which are wrought by the immediate power of God; and if we cannot distinguish them, they are equally miracles to us. When the angel slew 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, this ought in all reason to be reckoned a miracle; and yet this, though done by the command of God, an angel might do by his own power and strength; for *they excel in strength*: but what limitations to set to their power, we cannot tell, only it is finite; so that excepting those things which the scripture hath peculiarly appropriated to God, we cannot say what it is that an angel cannot do.

The same may be said concerning evil angels. The devil may work wonders, or assist his instruments to work them. So Pharaoh's magicians wrought several miracles by the power of the devil, and did some of the very same things that Moses and Aaron did, either really or in appearance, and it is all one whether. For he who to mens senses turns a rod into a serpent, works as great a miracle to me, as he who really does it; and if I am not to believe a thing to be a miracle, when to my senses it appears to be wrought, I am never to believe any, unless I could make some difference between those miracles which are real, and those that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to distinguish them, they are to us all one as if they were real; but if they may be distinguished, then there will be need of another miracle, to shew which are real, and which not; and the same question and doubt will arise about that miracle, and so without end.

So that I do not see what is gained by saying, that Pharaoh's magicians did only delude mens senses, but did not turn their rods really into serpents, as Aaron did

did his; because this may be said on one side, as well as on the other: for to the standers-by there was no difference, but the one seemed to the senses of the beholders to be as real as the other; and the text makes no difference, but says, *The magicians did in like manner; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents,* only Aaron's had this advantage, that *his rod swallowed up their rods:* but the main difference was here, Moses and Aaron wrought such miracles, as the magicians could not work, neither really, nor in appearance: for when Aaron, by smiting the dust with his rod, had turned it into lice, it is said that the magicians attempted to do so with their inchantments, but could not, and then they yielded, and acknowledged that it was *the finger of God.* And if they had not been thus plainly overcome, but could, to all appearance of sense, have done all those things which Moses and Aaron did, it might justly have been disputed which had been the true prophets.

So that the devil and his instruments may work miracles. Moses plainly supposeth that a false prophet, who comes to seduce the people to idolatry, may work a true sign or wonder. Deut. xiii. 1. 2. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods.* And our blessed Saviour expressly foretels, Matth. xxiv. 24. that *false Christs and false prophets shall arise after his death, and shew great signs and wonders.*

From all which it is evident, that it is not of the essence of a miracle, as many have thought, that it be an immediate effect of the divine power. It is sufficient, that it exceed any natural power that we know of to produce it. And if such effects be not to be esteemed miracles, a miracle would signify nothing; because no man could know when it is wrought, nor distinguish it from those effects which appear to be miraculous, but are not. This is the first property or condition of a miracle, that it be supernatural, that is, such an effect as exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. But then,

2. There is another condition also required to a miracle, that it be an effect evident and wonderful to sense for, if we do not see it, it is to us as if it were not, and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because itself stands in need of another miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought; and neither in scripture, nor in profane authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing called a miracle, but what falls under the notice of our senses; a miracle being nothing else but a thing wonderful to sense; and the very end and design of it is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of some thing which we do not see.

And for want of this condition, transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle: it would indeed be very supernatural, but for all that, it would not be a sign or wonder; for a sign or wonder is always a sensible thing, something that is wonderful and astonishing to sense, otherwise it is no sign or wonder. That such a change as is pretended in transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to sense; for our senses perceive no change, the bread and wine to all our senses remaining just as they were before. Now, that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it. We wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done: but no man wonders when he sees nothing done.

So that to speak the truth, transubstantiation, if they will have it a miracle, is such a miracle, as any man may work, that hath but confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed. And however they of the church of Rome are wont to magnify their priests, chiefly upon the account of this miracle, which they say they can work every day, and every hour if they please; yet I cannot understand, how it magnifies them so much; for when this great work, as they call it, is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no miracle. Now, such a miracle, as to all appearance is no miracle, I see no reason why a Protestant minister may not work as often as he pleaseth, as well as they: or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itself:

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for certainly nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it to make it just what it was before. In short, a miracle is a wonder to sense, and where a man sees nothing that is strange done, there is no miracle; for if he will call it a miracle, when things remain just as they were, and no sensible change is made in them, every man may every day work a thousand such miracles. I come now, in the

II. Place, to consider in what circumstances and with what cautions and limitations, miracles do give testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine; for instance, of the Christian doctrine: and for the clearing of this matter, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. That the entire proof of the Christian doctrine or religion, consists of many considerations, which, taken together, make up a full demonstration of the truth of it, when perhaps no one of them, taken singly and by itself, is a convincing and undeniable proof.

The Christian religion hath all the characters of divinity upon it, which any religion can be expected to have: whether we consider the doctrine of it, in which there is nothing unworthy of God; for it makes such a representation of God, and gives such directions concerning his worship, as is most agreeable to those apprehensions which the wisest men have always had of God, and of that service which is most proper to be given to him. Indeed, it declares something concerning God, which is very mysterious and past our comprehensions; but this ought not to offend us, since natural light always did acknowledge the divine nature to be incomprehensible.

The precepts likewise of this religion are highly reasonable, and such as plainly tend to the perfection and happiness of human nature; and the arguments to enforce these precepts are not only very powerful in themselves, but very suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

Or if we consider the author of this doctrine, our blessed Saviour, he will appear to be a divine person, *and a teacher sent from God*, by the clear predictions concerning him long before he came; which when he came were exactly

exactly fulfilled in him; by the miracles he wrought to give testimony of him; by the eminent holiness and virtue of his life; and by innumerable things which he foretold concerning himself, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, and the success of his doctrine in the world, which were all afterwards punctually accomplished. All these proved him to be an extraordinary person. But he was likewise declared to be *the Son of God*, by a voice from heaven, and by his resurrection from the dead.

Or if we consider the first publishers of this doctrine, to whom *God bare witness, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, and the wonderful success they met withal, notwithstanding the outward meanness of their persons, insomuch that their doctrine very suddenly prevailed, and passed like lightning through the world; and in the space of a few years spread itself beyond the utmost bounds of the vast Roman empire, and this in despite of the most powerful oppositions and fiercest persecutions that ever were raised against any religion; so that, like the children of Israel in Egypt, it did thrive under affliction, and the more it was oppressed, the more it grew and multiplied; because there was a divine power that did visibly accompany the first publishers of it, and men *were not able to resist the spirit whereby they spake*.

All these together make up a full and convincing demonstration of the truth and divinity of the Christian doctrine: and yet perhaps no one of these alone is a sufficient proof of it. For though a doctrine be never so reasonable in itself, this is no certain argument that it is from God, if no testimony from heaven be given to it; because it may be the result and issue of human reason and discourse: and though a doctrine be attested by miracles, yet the matter of it may be so unreasonable and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so contrary to the natural notions which men have of him, that no miracles can be sufficient to give confirmation to it; and therefore in some cases the scripture forbids men to hearken to a prophet, though he work a miracle: Deut. xiii. 1. 2. 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,*

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and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. And the reason is given, ver. 5. *Because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God.* From whence it is plain, that a miracle is not sufficient to establish the worship of a false god.

The sum of what I have said is this, that we do not found our belief of Christianity upon any one argument taken by itself; but upon the whole evidence which we are able to produce for it, in which there is nothing wanting that is proper and reasonable to prove any religion to be from God.

2. But yet miracles are the principal external proof and confirmation of the divinity of a doctrine. I told you before, that some doctrines are so absurd, that a miracle is not a sufficient proof of them: but if a doctrine be such as is nowise unworthy of God, nor contrary to those notions which we have of him, miracles are the highest testimony that can be given to it, and have always been owned by mankind for an evidence of inspiration. And therefore Nicodemus takes it for an acknowledged principle, that miracles are a sign of a *teacher sent from God.* John iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for none can do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And the scripture constantly resolves the divinity of any person or doctrine into miracles, as the chief external evidence that they are from God. This was the testimony which God gave to Moses, to satisfy the people of Israel that he had sent him. Exod. iv. 1. *And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God tells Moses, that he would give him a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them, that *they may believe, that the God of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.* And all along in the Old Testament, when God sent his prophets to make any new revelation, or upon any extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them, by some sign or wonder. And when

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he ſent his Son into the world, he bare witneſs to him, by more and greater miracles than Moſes or any of the prophets had wrought. And to this teſtimony both our Saviour himſelf and the apoſtles appeal, as the great evidence of the divinity of their doctrine. When John the Baptiſt ſent his diſciples to our Saviour, to be ſatisfied whether he was the Meſſias, he refers them to his miracles: Matth. xi. 4. 5. *Go and ſhew John again thoſe things which ye do hear and ſee. The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed up.* And John v. 36. *But I have greater witneſs than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* And Acts ii. 22. *Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you,* ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδεδειγμένον *εἰς ὑμᾶς, a man demonſtrated by God to you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which he did in the midſt of you.* And Acts xiv. 3. it is ſaid, that when the apoſtles preached the goſpel, *God gave teſtimony unto the word of his grace, and granted ſigns and wonders to be done by their hands.* From all which it is plain that our religion appeals to miracles, as the great external confirmation of it.

3. Eſpecially if miracles have all the circumſtances of advantage given to them which they are capable of; if they be many and great, public and unqueſtionable, and univerſal, and of long continuance. And ſuch were the miracles wrought by Moſes, and by our Saviour and his apoſtles, which for their nature and quality, for the number and continuance of them, and for all other circumſtances that may give credit to them, and argue them to be from God, are in no degree to be equalled by thoſe which any other religion hath pretended to.

And in theſe circumſtances, miracles alone are in moſt caſes a ſufficient proof of the divinity of a doctrine: for there is a great deal of difference in reaſon to be made between one or two ſtrange and miraculous effects, and thoſe not of the higheſt and moſt unqueſtionable rank of miracles neither, privately wrought, and before few witneſſes; and a long continued ſeries of miracles of all kinds, and ſuch as are univerſally acknowledged to be above the power of nature, and thoſe publicly wrought

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in the face and view of the world, in every city and country, by a great many persons for many years, yea, for many ages together. The former may be doubted of, but the latter carry so sensible a conviction with them, that it is not credible, that the divine goodness should permit so great and overpowering a testimony to be given to a falsehood.

4. It cannot be denied, but that God doth sometimes permit miracles to be wrought for the countenancing of a false doctrine. This the Heathens pretended to at their temples and oracles; and it is not incredible, that God should permit the devil to do several strange and extraordinary things; though it be certain that there was a great deal of cheat and imposture mingled with them. To be sure the scripture owns the working of miracles by false prophets. Moses takes notice of it in his law, and provides against it as a case that might happen; and our Saviour expressly foretels it, Matth. xxiv.; and so does St Paul, 2 Thess. ii. that *the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with power, and signs, and wonders of lies;* that is, should work miracles to countenance his false and impious doctrines. And the scripture likewise tells us, for what reason God does sometimes permit this to be done. For the trial of the good: Deut. xiii. 3. *For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your hearts.* And for hardening of the wicked, by the just judgment of God: 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11. 12. *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them* ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, *the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

5. and lastly, God never permits miracles to be wrought for the confirmation of a false doctrine, but he affords sufficient marks, whereby those who are free and impartial inquirers after truth, and sincere lovers of it, may distinguish truth from imposture. So our Saviour tells us, that the elect, that is, the true and sincere Christians, should not be deceived by the *signs and wonders of the false Christs and false prophets.* And therefore he was not afraid of having

ing the credit of this doctrine weakened, by foretelling that false prophets should work miracles; because he knew when the devil had done his utmost, the difference would be apparent enough between the confirmation which he had given to the Christian doctrine, and what the devil should be able to give to his instruments. As,

1. Either the doctrine would be absurd in itself, and such as no miracles can confirm; as in the case which Moses instanceth in, of a miracle wrought to seduce them from the worship of the one true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols. Or else,

2. It would be contrary to that doctrine which had already had a far greater and more divine confirmation. And this likewise is another reason intimated by Moses, why the people should not hearken to a prophet that would seduce them to idolatry, though he should work a miracle; *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt;* that is, from that God who hath demonstrated himself to them by such a series of great and unquestionable miracles as ought in all reason to bear down any single sign and wonder.

And the case is the same, if miracles should now be pretended for the confirmation of any thing plainly contrary to the Christian doctrine, which being established by such miracles as never were wrought in the world upon any other occasion, it cannot be thought reasonable, that any evidence inferior to this should be able to control it, or to give credit to any thing that contradicted it. And in this case the apostle has expressly forbidden Christians to hearken to a contrary doctrine, *though they themselves, or an angel from heaven, should preach it,* Gal. i. 8. Therefore St Paul expressly lays down this rule, whereby we may judge what miraculous powers are from the Spirit of God, and what not, 1 Cor. xii. 1. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant,* that is, what miraculous gifts are from the Spirit of God, and what not; and then, ver. 3. he gives this rule, *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:* that is, if any man pre-

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tend to be inspired, and to be endowed with a miraculous power, and yet blasphemeth Christ, this spirit is not from God: but if any man be endowed with this power, and acknowledge Christ, we may safely conclude this power to be from the Holy Ghost. The very same rule St John lays down yet more plainly, 1 John iv. 1. 2. 3. *Believe not every spirit*, that is, not every one that pretends to the gifts and inspirations of the Spirit; *but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* And ver. 6. *We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* This seems at first sight to be a very odd rule, and what every false teacher, and every sect may lay down in favour of themselves; *He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that knoweth not God, heareth not us*; and nothing can make it reasonable, but the consideration that the Christian religion being already so abundantly confirmed beyond contradiction, is itself become a rule to try spirits or miracles by. Or,

3. The miracles which false prophets work, are presently confuted, and upon the spot. Thus Moses confuted and conquered Pharaoh's magicians, by working miracles which they could not work; which forced them to yield the cause, and acknowledge that it was *the finger of God.* And so likewise Simon Magus, who had gained so great a reputation among the people by his sorceries, as to be called *the mighty power of God*, was confuted by the apostles, who, by the laying on of hands, conferred a miraculous power on men; which he not being able to do, would have purchased it with money. And so Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by St Paul. And the miracles of the Heathen temples and oracles, upon the preaching of the gospel, ceased, as being ashamed of themselves; as Prophyry, one of the bittereſt enemies of Christianity, doth expressly acknowledge. Or else,

Lastly, The miracles wrought, or pretended to be

wrought, to confirm false doctrines, are such as do some way or other confute themselves; or if they be real are sufficiently detected to be the pranks of the devil and not the great and glorious works of God. Such were the miracles of the Heathen deities, wrought so privately and obscurely, and confessedly mixed with so much of imposture, as to bring a just suspicion upon them that when they were real, the devil was the author of them. And such were the miracles which are attributed to Mahomet; either grossly absurd and ridiculous, as that of part of the moon coming down into his sleeve and his remanding it into its place again; or else destitute of all proof and witness, as that of a camel's speaking to him by night; and his pigeon whispering to him in his ear: which if it had been intended for a miracle the pigeon should not have whispered, but have spoken out, that others might have heard it. But Mahomet was so conscious to himself of his own defect in point of miracles, that he laid no weight upon them, *being*, as he said, *not sent to convert the world by miracles, but to conquer them by force of arms.*

And now I am sorry I have occasion to say, but it is too true, that the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, for the confirmation of their erroneous doctrines are of the same stamp with these, taxed by several of their best writers of imposture and forgery, of fable and romance, so extravagant, and freakish, and a fantastical wrought without any necessity, and serving to no wise end, that they are so far from giving credit to their doctrines, that they are a mighty scandal to to them, and to our common Christianity: whereas the truly divine miracles, reported to us in scripture, how unlike are they to these? How venerable in themselves, and in all the circumstances with which they are related never wrought but upon great necessity, and for excellent ends, full of benefit and advantage, of mercy and compassion to mankind; and in a word, such as are every way worthy of their author, having plain characters of the divine wisdom and goodness stamped upon them.

And thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to speak to, namely, that miracles are a divine testi-

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mony; and in what circumstances, and with what cautions and limitations they are so. I shall at present only draw some inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this argument.

1. What has been said may satisfy us of the truth and divinity of the Christian doctrine, which had so eminent a testimony given to it from heaven, and did at first so strangely prevail in the world, contrary to all human probability, *not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* No man can suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts more unlikely to sustain and bear up itself, than Christianity was. The first appearance of it was so weak, its beginnings so small, and the instruments employed in the propagation of it so mean and despicable, that no man but would have concluded it must presently have sunk and come to nought; and no other reason can be given of the strange success and prevalency of it, but that *it was of God*, and therefore *it could not be overthrown.*

2. From hence we may judge how groundless the pretences are, which men now-a-days make to inspiration and infallibility; because this is not to be proved and made out any other way but by miracles. For either we must believe every pretence of this kind; and then we are at the mercy of every crafty and confident man, to be led by him into what delusions he pleases: or we must only believe those who give some testimony of their inspiration: but the evidence of inspiration was always miracles. This is the testimony which God hath always given to those whom he hath sent upon an extraordinary message to mankind. And this is that which we reasonably demand of our modern enthusiasts, and of the great pretender to infallibility, the Bishop of Rome; because nothing can be more vain, than for men to pretend to inspiration, and an infallible spirit, without miracles. And yet I cannot learn that the Popes themselves, among all their boundless privileges and powers, do so much as pretend to a power of miracles, which yet is the only thing that can in reason support their pretences to infallibility.

3. You see what an immediate testimony from hea-

ven God was pleaſed to give to the firſt preachers of the Chriſtian doctrine, to qualify them with any probability of ſucceſs, to conteſt with violent and almoſt invincible prejudices of men educated in a contrary religion, and which had the ſecular authority and laws on its ſide. For having this divine ſeal given to their commiſſion, they did, as it were, carry the letters patents of heaven in their hands, and an authority paramount to that of human laws. And therefore the wiſdom of God, which does nothing which is ſuperfluous and unneceſſary, did not think the apoſtles ſufficiently armed and appointed for this deſign, by a commiſſion from the mouth of the Son of God, without this divine ſeal and teſtimony of miracles, as a viſible evidence of their divine commiſſion. And therefore our Saviour, after he had commiſſioned them *to preach the goſpel to all nations*, commanded them not to enter upon this work, nor to depart from Jeruſalem, *till they had received the promiſe of the Father*, that is, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, Acts i. 4. And ſo our Saviour explains it, Luke xxiv. 47. where, after he had commanded, *that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations*, beginning at Jeruſalem, he adds, ver. 49. *And behold, I ſend the promiſe of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jeruſalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* And to the ſame purpoſe, Acts i. 8. *But ye ſhall receive power after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you*; by which he tells us, they were qualified to be *witneſſes unto him, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth.*

4. and laſtly, The conſideration of what hath been ſaid, doth juſtly upbraid us, that our religion, which hath ſuch evident marks of divinity upon it, and comes down to us confirmed by ſo many miracles, ſhould yet have ſo little efficacy upon the lives of the greateſt part of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. It is true, miracles are now ceaſed among Chriſtians, our religion being ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by thoſe that were wrought at firſt; and now the greateſt miracle, in theſe latter ages, is a good man, a true and ſincere Chriſtian: but the laws of Chriſtianity are ſtill the ſame; and the motives

tives and arguments to a good life are the same; and though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have left the world, yet the sealing and sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost do still remain. We cannot now speak all languages, as the apostles did: but we may do that which is much better, and more pleasing to God, we may live holy and virtuous lives. We have not that faith which works by miracles: but we may have that which is far more excellent, *the faith which works by charity; which*, if we believe St Paul, is more than *to speak with the tongues of men and angels*, more than *to prophesy*, and to *understand all mysteries and all knowledge*.

The admirable piety and virtue of the first Christians are still upon record for our imitation: but I know not how it comes to pass, we chuse rather lazily to admire those patterns, than vigorously to imitate them; as if the holiness of those times were also miraculous, and not intended for the imitation of succeeding ages; as if it were impossible for us now to lead such lives as they did; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things, were altered since that time; as if the Christian religion were now quite dispirited, and had lost all its vigour and force; and as if the Holy Spirit of God had, to all intents and purposes, forsaken the world, and were retired to the Father.

But our religion is still the same it was; the precepts of it as reasonable, and the promises of it as powerful as ever; God is still the same he was; and Christ still *at the right hand of God, making intercession for us*; and the Holy Spirit of God still ready to assist us, *to every good word and work*.

To conclude: We have, beyond comparison, the best and most reasonable religion in the world; a religion which carries along with it the greatest evidence of its truth, which contains the best rules and directions for a good life, which offers the most powerful assistance to the obedience of its laws, and gives the greatest encouragements thereto, by the assurance of a blessed immortality in another world. Now, the better our religion is, our case is so much the worse, if we be not made good by it. Philosophy had some effect upon the world to make some men temperate, and chaste, and just,

and honeſt in their lives. And the Jewiſh religion (as weak and imperfect as it was, and though it was but *the ſhadow of good things to come*) hath yet left us many eminent examples of good and holy men. What then ſhall become of us, if the beſt inſtitution in the world, the bleſſed goſpel of the Son of God, have leſs effect upon us, than the doctrine of Pythagoras, and the law of Moſes had upon them? *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God alſo bearing them witneſs, with ſigns, and wondes, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.* To which bleſſed and glorious Trinity, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

SERMON CCXXX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Chriſtianity.

HEB ii. 4.

God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according his own will.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have begun to diſcourſe upon theſe words, from which I told you three things offer themſelves to our conſideration.

Firſt, That miracles are a divine teſtimony to a perſon or doctrine. God is here ſaid *to bear witneſs to the apoſtles, by ſigns, and wonders, and miracles.*

Secondly, That God gave this teſtimony to the apoſtles, and firſt publiſhers of the goſpel, in a very eminent

nent manner; for so the phrase signifies, *God bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and miracles*; so many words to the same sense, being purposely used to signify the greatness of the thing.

Thirdly, The reasons why miracles are now ceased in the church, and have been for several ages; so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for several ages past. The first I have spoken to, and proceed now to the

Second thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* That God gave testimony to the apostles and first publishers of Christianity, in a very eminent manner; for so the expression in the text signifies, where so many several words are used for the same thing, to express, according to the manner of the Hebrew phrase, the greatness of the thing; *God bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, that is, with many and great miracles, καὶ μερισμοῖς, *and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will*; that is, God distributed these several miraculous powers and gifts among the apostles and first preachers of the gospel; not all to every one of them, but some to one, and some to another, as to him seemed best, and was most for the benefit and edification of the church.

The history of it in short is this. When our blessed Saviour ascended into heaven, he promised to send down his Spirit in miraculous gifts upon his apostles, to give credit to his doctrine, and to qualify them for the more speedy planting and propagating of it in the world; and accordingly, not many days after he was ascended into heaven, as an evidence of the power and glory he was invested withal, he, according to his promise immediately before his ascension, sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles in a visible manner, that is, in the form of fiery cloven tongues, as an emblem of one of the principal gifts they were endowed withal, *viz.* the knowledge and ability of speaking several languages, which they had never learned. And this happened upon the day of Pentecost, that so the gospel might exactly correspond to the dispensation of the law, which was the type and figure of it. And therefore, as

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our Saviour died at the time of the Jewish passover, which was the type of his sufferings; so the gospel, which was the perfection and fulfilling of the law, began to be published at the very same time that the law was given from mount Sinai, *viz.* at the end of the seven weeks after the passover. For at this time the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles in miraculous powers and gifts; when this new *law was to come forth out of Zion, and the law of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

And among these gifts, the first we find mentioned was the gift of tongues; without which, the gospel must of necessity have been very slowly propagated in the world: for had the apostles been first to learn the several languages of the nations they were to preach to, how tedious a work would that have been? it requiring the industry of some years, to gain so perfect a mastery of a strange language, as to be able to use it with that freedom and readiness which is necessary for such a work.

And this gift all the apostles had, because they had all occasion for it, being designed by our Saviour to be the chief publishers of his gospel to the world. And this gift did also continually reside upon them, and not only at some times, as some other gifts did, because they had constant use of this gift of tongues.

The interpreting of things spoken in a strange tongue was also a gift distinct from the gift of tongues, though attending it; insomuch that some persons had one, and some the other. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To one is given divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues.* The occasion of which was plainly this: It might happen, and often did, that the auditory might consist of people of several nations; now, because no man could speak more than one language at once, it was convenient others should have the gift of interpreting what was spoken, to those who understood not the language in which it was spoken, that so all might receive the benefit of what was delivered, and be edified thereby. So that here were two several gifts serving the same end, *viz.* the conveying of the knowledge of the gospel to mankind, in a more speedy way than it could have done by

by ordinary means; and these were very plain and sensible miracles, unquestionably supernatural, and evident to the senses of all men. So that the gospel, where-ever it was preached, carried its own testimony along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery: and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and the means whereby it was published was a miracle.

And here I cannot but take notice, how contrary the arts and the ways of the church of Rome are to the methods of God, and that when he was at the expence of so many miracles to publish this doctrine to the world, they should use so much industry and violence to conceal it. God was pleased to endow the first preachers of it with the gift of tongues, that *their sound might go into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*; that there might be no nation nor language where this saving knowledge might not come; that the sermons which they preached, and the prayers which they put up to God in public, for themselves and the people, and all the offices of religion which they performed, might be fully understood by all, and that all might join in them, and have the benefit and comfort of them; that their understandings might be informed and enlightened by what was spoken, and their affections raised and warmed by their understandings, and their wills excited by their affections; and that the effect of all this might appear in their lives and practice. Thus it was in the primitive Christian church: but in the church of Rome, things are managed in a quite contrary way, and have been for several ages. The doctrine of salvation, as it is contained and delivered in the holy scripture, is a sealed book, which the people are not thought worthy to open or look into. This *bread of life which came down from heaven*, is like *the shew-bread* among the Jews, *which none may eat but the priest only*, unless it be by extraordinary favour, and particular licence from the bishop. The people indeed come together, and are present at the prayers and devotion of the priest; but the priest *that prays is a barbarian to them*, and all the while the understanding

underſtanding of the people is unfruitful, and *they cannot ſay amen, becauſe they underſtand not what he ſays.*

But let any man ſhew me the leaſt intimation in ſcripture or antiquity, that our Saviour, or his apoſtles, or the primitive church, ever uſed this way; and yet the danger of error and hereſy was as great then, as it is now. So that the church of Rome muſt pretend themſelves wiſer than our Saviour and his apoſtles; and to be more careful to prevent hereſy in the church, than they were. This they are loath to ſay; and yet they muſt ſay it, if they will juſtify their own doings. But the plain truth is, there is another and truer reaſon for it, though they are not willing to own it, and that is this; if the ſcriptures were permitted to the people in a language which they underſtand, the errors of their church would be diſcovered and laid open, and men would plainly diſcern how contrary many of their doctrines and practices are, to thoſe of our Saviour and his apoſtles: for *every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be diſcovered.*

Secondly, The next miraculous gift I ſhall mention after the gift of tongues, is the gift of prophecy, or foretelling things future, which was always looked upon as an evidence of inſpiration. And this we find mentioned, 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To another prophecy*, and in ſeveral other places; and to this gift the Apoſtle gives a great pre-eminence, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. *Covet ſpiritual gifts: but rather that ye may propheſy;* becauſe foretelling of things to come was always eſteemed by mankind an evidence of a perſon divinely inſpired, and conſequently was one of the greateſt teſtimonies of the truth of Chriſtianity; and this the angel that appeared to St John particularly takes notice of, Rev. xix. 10. *The teſtimony of Jeſus is the ſpirit of prophecy.* The prophecies of that book were to be a ſtanding teſtimony of the truth of Chriſtianity in all ages of the church.

Thirdly, The next gift is that of healing all manner of diſeaſes. And this the apoſtles ſeem generally to have had, and the elders of the church alſo, whoſe peculiar office it was to pray over the ſick, and to anoint them with oil; and upon their prayers, God was pleaſed

sed to grant miraculous recoveries, as we find expressly promised, James v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*

This miraculous power we find likewise mentioned to be conferred on the apostles in our Saviour's life-time, when he first gave them commission to preach the gospel to the Jews, Mark vi. 12. 13. where it is said, that *they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

And now that this miraculous gift is ceased, there is no reason why the mere ceremony of anointing with oil should continue; which yet is still used in the church of Rome, and made a sacrament, though it signify nothing: for they do not pretend to heal men by it; nay, they pretend the contrary, because they never use it, but in extremity, and where they look upon the person as past recovery; and if they did not think so, they would not use it.

But besides the healing, with this solemnity of anointing with oil, and with prayer, which seems to have been used by the elders of the church only upon those who were members of the church, there was likewise a general gift of healing, which the apostles exercised upon all occasions where-ever they came; and this was performed only by laying their hands on the sick. And this we find promised by our Saviour to his apostles, when he gave them commission to preach the gospel to all the world, immediately before his ascension; and not only to the apostles, but to those who should believe upon their preaching: Mark xvi. 17. 18. *These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils,* &c. and then it follows, *they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

Fourthly, The power of raising the dead, which hath always been esteemed one of the greatest and most unquestionable miracles of all other. A principal part of the apostles office was to *be witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead,* whereby he was so *powerfully demonstrated*

demonſtrated to be the Son of God. But becauſe this was a ſtrange relation, and not eaſy to be credited, by thoſe who were ſtrangers to the apoſtles, and had never known them before; therefore that they might witneſs this with more authority, God was pleaſed to endow them with a miraculous power of all kinds; and particularly with a power of raiſing the dead, and then there was no difficulty in receiving their teſtimony concerning our Saviour's reſurrection, when men ſaw them in his name raiſe others from the dead. And of this we have two inſtances in the Acts of the Apoſtles; of St Peter's raiſing Dorcas, Acts ix. and St Paul's raiſing Eutychus, Acts xx. And Irenæus, who lived in the age after the apoſtles, tells us, that in his time this power continued among Chriſtians.

Fifthly, Another miraculous gift was that of diſcerning ſpirits; the principal uſe of which was, to try and judge who were true prophets. And of this the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. xiv. 29. *Let the prophets ſpeak two or three, and let the other judge.* And ver. 32. *The ſpirits of the prophets are ſubject to the prophets.* And this is likewiſe called by the ſame apoſtle, *the gift of diſcerning ſpirits.* 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To another is given the diſcerning of ſpirits.* Thoſe who pretended to this gift were tried by the biſhops and elders of the church, as the prophets were tried among the Jews by the Sanhedrim. And of theſe kind of aſſemblies among the Chriſtians, for the trial of prophets, Euſebius ſpeaks particularly in his fifth book.

And it ſhould ſeem likewiſe that this gift of diſcerning ſpirits extended alſo to the diſcovery of the ſecrets of mens hearts; by the revealing whereof, unbelievers were many times ſuddenly ſtruck and convinced; as may very probably be collected from 1 Cor. xiv. 24. 25. *But if all propheſy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the ſecrets of his heart made manifeſt; and ſo falling down on his face, he will worſhip God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

And upon this miraculous gift of knowing the ſecrets of mens hearts, it ſeems to be very probable, that that which is commonly called *the power of the keys* did depend:

depend: I mean *the power of remitting or retaining sins*: for they who had the privilege of knowing mens hearts, might do this upon certain grounds, and were secured from mistake in the exercise of their power upon particular persons; which the priests and ministers of the church now are not, nor can be; because they cannot see into mens hearts, whether they be truly penitent and qualified for forgiveness or not. For I cannot easily believe but that those words of our Saviour, *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained*, were intended to signify something more than a mere declaration of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, which any man might make as well as the apostles and ministers of the church. For that God will forgive the penitent, and that he will not pardon the sinner, except he repent, is as true from any man's mouth, as from an apostle's: and as to the absolution of this or that particular person, though a minister, by the skill and knowledge of his profession, is ordinarily and reasonably presumed, by virtue of his office, to be a better judge of a man's repentance, than other persons are, and therefore may, with more authority and satisfaction to the penitent, declare his judgment and opinion concerning him; yet not being able to see into his heart, he may be mistaken concerning him; and if he be, his declaring his sins to be forgiven, that is, his absolution of him, will do him no good: and on the other hand, his refusal to absolve him, if he be truly penitent, will do him no harm. As the judgment of a skilful lawyer is of greater authority, and more satisfactory to us concerning our title to an estate, than the opinion of another man, who is not of the profession, nor presumed to have the like skill; but yet for all this, his judgment does not alter the case; and if in truth the law be otherwise, our title is bad, for all this skilful man's opinion of the goodness of it.

And thus much is granted by the church of Rome, that if the priest be mistaken in the use of the keys, and gives absolution to one that is not truly penitent, his sins are not remitted; or if a person be excommunicated that is not truly guilty, his sins are not retained: what *he binds on earth, is not bound in heaven; and he whom*

he looſeth and abſolves on earth, is not abſolved in heaven. But the Proteſtants go farther, and do not only make a miſtaken abſolution or excommunication void in itſelf; but they do not make the abſolution of the prieſt at all neceſſary to the forgiveneſs of ſins, but only convenient for the ſatisfaction and comfort of the penitent. For which reaſon, our church does not require a formal abſolution to be given to the dying penitent, unleſs he himſelf deſire it; which is a certain argument, that, in the judgment of our church, the abſolution of the prieſt is not neceſſary to the forgiveneſs and ſalvation of the penitent. For had they thought it neceſſary, they would have injoined the prieſt to give it to every one whom he judged penitent, whether he deſired it or not.

So that the abſolution of the prieſt, having only the authority of a man, preſumed to be ſkilful in his office, but no certain effect, in caſe he be miſtaken, (as he very eaſily may be, and if he be, as he ought to be, a charitable man, no doubt often is), I cannot think but that this power of *remitting and retaining ſins*, ſo ſolemnly conferred on the apoſtles by our Saviour, had ſomething in it that was miraculous and extraordinary, and did ſuppoſe the knowledge of mens hearts, and that they were not miſtaken in the application of this power to particular perſons; and conſequently, that, in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was peculiar to the apoſtles and their times. For I cannot eaſily be brought to believe, that the meaning of this great promiſe to the apoſtles ſhould be only this, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth,* if ye be not miſtaken, as in many caſes ye will be, and in any caſe ye may be, *ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven.* And if more be meant than this, it muſt ſuppoſe a miraculous power of diſcerning the ſincerity of mens hearts.

And therefore when the power of the keys is conferred on the miniſters of the goſpel, in our form of ordination, I ſuppoſe that only one or both of theſe two things is intended by it, *viz.* a power to admit perſons into the Chriſtian church by baptiſm, in which is ſealed

to

to them the remission of sins; and to cast persons out of the communion of the Christian church, by excommunication and the censures of it: and an authority, by virtue of their office, to declare to men the terms of pardon and forgiveness, which cannot be that infallible power of absolving which the apostles had.

And I am the rather induced to think so, because I find it promised to the apostles, together with the miraculous power and efficacy of prayer, which St Chrysostom reckons among the miraculous gifts, which he says were ceased in his time. That it was thus promised, you may see, Matth. xviii. 18. 19. *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* But surely no man will pretend that any two Christians or ministers have now this power, that whatever they shall agree together to ask of God, which is fit and lawful, in behalf of any person, God will certainly grant it upon their request. In the same sense I understand several other texts concerning the efficacy of the prayers of the apostles and first Christians, as in a great measure miraculous, and peculiar to the first times of Christianity. And I think any man that attentively considers them, will think that they cannot well be understood otherwise. Such as these, Matth. xxi. 22. *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Mark xi. 24. *I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* John xiv. 14. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it;* and chap. xv. 17. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* 1 John iii. 22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him;* and chap. v. 14. 15. *And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* These promises I take to contain something extraordinary, and peculiar to the first

times of Christianity. And this will appear exceeding probable, if we consider the occasion and circumstances of these promises, which are so often joined with the promise of a miraculous power, as in the place I mentioned before, Matth. xviii. 18. 19. where, after the power of *binding and loosing*, it immediately follows, that *if two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* Matth. xxi. 22. and Mark xi. 23. says our Saviour there to his disciples, *Have faith in God: for verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.* And then immediately it follows, *Therefore I say unto you, Whatsoever things ye desire when you pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them;* that is, whatever ye desire of God to do, he shall miraculously do it upon your prayers. So likewise John xiv. 12. 13. 14. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Still you see this extraordinary efficacy of prayer is joined with the power of miracles, as one part and branch of it. More particularly, we find the forgiveness of the sins of those whom they pray for, expressly promised, 1 John v. 15. *And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* And then it follows, *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for the sin that is not unto death.* Where forgiveness of sins, upon the prayers of Christians for one another, is promised, except in the case of *a sin unto death*, by which is meant apostasy from Christianity to the Heathen idolatry, which is the reason of the caution which follows; *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* And this extraordinary efficacy of prayer, we find promised in a more especial manner to the elders of the church, James

v. 14.

v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

In comparing of all these texts, it seems plain, that both the power of remitting and retaining sins, and the strange efficacy of prayer, which were promised to the apostles and first Christians, had something miraculous and extraordinary in them, and were peculiar to the first ages of the church. I will not be peremptory in these things; but this seems to be the most genuine and reasonable interpretation of these texts.

Sixthly, And besides these which I have mentioned, there was likewise a power of inflicting corporal punishments and diseases upon scandalous and obstinate Christians; which in scripture is called, *a delivering men up to Satan, for the destroying or tormenting of their bodies, that their souls might be saved at last.* And of this kind were those diseases which befel the Corinthians, for their disorderly and irregular carriage at the sacrament, of which the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xi. 30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;* that is, to some of them these distempers proved mortal. And we find that this power did in some cases extend to the inflicting of sudden and present death, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. And, indeed, considering that Christianity was at first destitute of any countenance from the civil power, some such power as this was necessary to maintain the authority of the apostles against the contumacious and disobedient.

And then, *lastly*, there was the power of casting out devils in the name of Christ, which was common to the meanest Christian, and continued in the church a long time after most of the other gifts were ceased, as Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Arnobius, do most expressly testify concerning their times.

Thus you see that there were almost all imaginable kinds of miraculous powers conferred upon the apostles and first Christians, to give the greater establishment and confirmation to the Christian doctrine.

All the reflection I shall make upon what has been said, shall be this: Since our religion comes down to us confirmed by such miraculous powers, *we ought to take the more earnest heed to it*, to believe it more stedfastly, and to practise it carefully in our lives. *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

SERMON CCXXXI.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

The third sermon on this text.

IN these words three things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine.

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles and first publishers of the gospel in a very eminent manner. Of these two I have discoursed at large, and now proceed to the

Third and last thing which I proposed, *viz.* the reason why these miracles are now ceased in the Christian church, and have been for a long time, so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for many ages. And in the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things.

I. Shew that these miraculous gifts and powers have ceased in the Christian church for several ages.

II. I shall assign a plain reason of the ceasing of miracles after such a time.

III. Answer the objection from the innumerable miracles which have been, and are still pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome.

I. I shall shew, that these miraculous powers and gifts have ceased in the church for several ages. That they are now ceased, we find by certain experience; nor are they pretended to at this day, by any part of the Christian church, except the church of Rome, where yet they are nothing so plentiful now-a-days, as they were in those ignorant ages, from the time of the degeneracy and corruption of the western church down to the reformation; and now chiefly pretended to in those parts of the Roman communion, where their religion reigns without any contradiction, and the people are under the awe and lash of the inquisition, so that they dare neither gainsay, nor offer to detect the forgery and imposture of them; and yet here is less need of them, because the people are all of a mind, and believe as the church would have them, and dare not for their lives do otherwise. For where the inquisition rules, and ignorance, the mother, not of true devotion, but of credulity and superstition, is carefully preserved, there is no need of miracles to make people believe what they have a mind to: but in other places, where their religion is opposed, and there is great occasion for them, both to confirm those of their own religion, and to reduce heretics and unbelievers, there is little or no pretence to them, as I shall shew by and by.

So that all over the Christian church, except in the church of Rome, all pretence to these miraculous powers and gifts is now ceased, and hath been for many ages. St Chrysostom speaking of his time, which was about four hundred years after Christ, says that these miraculous powers were then ceased, and speaks as if no footsteps of them were left in the pastors and governors of the church, much less among private Christians; for which he gives us this substantial reason, which I shall speak to afterwards, that Christianity being now already established by miracles, there was no reason to expect the

the continuance of them. St Auguſtine indeed, ſome time after, ſpeaks of many miraculous things done at ſepulchres of the martyrs. But this doth not contradict what St Chryſoſtom had ſaid, becauſe he ſpeaks of the living teachers and members of the church, in whom theſe miraculous gifts and powers were ceaſed; but that the ſame miraculous cures were wrought, upon the prayers of Chriſtians, at the tombs of the martyrs, is a confirmation of the thing, that God deſigned to honour the primitive Chriſtians and martyrs with theſe gifts, and not to continue them to the ſucceeding ages of the church; and therefore God was pleaſed that ſo many wonderful things ſhould be done at their ſepulchres, to ſhew that he did intend, that theſe miraculous powers and gifts ſhould die with them, and continue no longer in the living members of the church.

II. I ſhall now aſſign a plain reaſon of the ceaſing of theſe miraculous gifts after ſuch a time; namely, becauſe there was not the like neceſſity and occaſion for them, that there was before. They were at firſt in a great degree neceſſary to introduce the goſpel into the world, which was deſtitute of all other helps and advantages, to recommend it to the eſteem and liking of mankind; to give credit to a new doctrine and religion, ſo contrary to the inveterate prejudices of men, bred up in another religion very different from this, and ſo oppoſite to the luſts and intereſts of men; to make way for the more ſpeedy and effectual planting of this religion in the world; to ſtrengthen the hands of the firſt publiſhers of it, and to give credit to their teſtimony, concerning that ſtrange relation of theirs, of the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead; to be a ſenſible evidence and conviction to men, of the divinity of that new doctrine which was preached unto them, and to ſupport and confirm them in the belief and profeſſion of it, againſt thoſe terrible ſufferings and perſecutions, which for the ſake of it they were expoſed to. For theſe reaſons God was pleaſed to ſhed abroad ſo plentifully theſe miraculous gifts, among the firſt preachers and profeſſors of Chriſtianity; and as theſe reaſons ceaſed or abated, ſo did theſe miraculous powers and gifts: and therefore as ſoon as the goſpel was planted, which it was in a great part of

of the then known world, during the lives of the apostles, the gift of tongues ceased, and we hear no more of it, because there was no farther use and occasion for it. Other gifts did continue longer, but abated by degrees, according as Christianity gained ground and establishment, and they grew less frequent, as there was less need of them. The power of casting out devils, which was most common, for every Christian had it, continued longest; and there was reason it should continue so long as the devil reigned, and the Pagan idolatry was kept up, to shew that the Spirit of Christ was superior to the devil, and would finally overcome him, and overthrow his kingdom, according to that of St John, 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.* And this appeared in that they were able in the name of Christ to cast him out where-ever he had taken possession, which God permitted to be very frequent in those times, for the more glorious manifestation of his power, in *casting out the prince of this world.* But when the powers of the world became Christian, and the Heathen idolatry was every where overthrown, and Satan's kingdom every where destroyed, then this miraculous gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it. And now that *the kingdoms of the world were become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*, and that the gospel was planted, and had taken firm root, and was fully settled and established, these miraculous powers, which were at first necessary to balance the mighty difficulties and oppositions which Christianity met withal, and to supply the want of all manner of countenance from the civil authority, were withdrawn and did cease, because there was no need of their longer continuance.

Besides that it is to be considered, that those miraculous powers which manifested themselves in the first ages of Christianity, were intended by God to give a standing confirmation to it in after ages; as the miracles that were wrought at the giving of the law, and the bringing of the children of Israel into Canaan, were designed for a standing confirmation of the Jewish religion, the memory whereof was so carefully preserved and transmitted

mitted to after ages, that they needed not to be repeated. I come now, in the

III. And laſt place, to anſwer that objection from the innumerable miracles which have been, and are ſtill pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome. And ſo indeed we find that the Arians and other heretics in former times pretended to miracles, for the confirmation of their errors, a good while after miracles were generally ceaſed in the Chriſtian church, which ſhews that this is no new or ſtrange thing.

In anſwer to this objection, I deſire theſe following particulars may be conſidered.

Firſt, That the moſt learned and judicious writers of the Roman church do acknowledge that there is no neceſſity of miracles now, and that Chriſtianity is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by the miracles which were wrought at firſt to give teſtimony to it; and therefore not being neceſſary, without manifeſt evidence of fact, it is not neceſſary to believe that they are continued.

Secondly, The miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, are of very doubtful and ſuſpected credit, even among the wiſeſt perſons of their own communion; and therefore I hope they do not expect we ſhould give much credit to thoſe miracles, of the truth of which they themſelves are in ſo much doubt, that they are generally looked upon by the more prudent and learned among them, as pious frauds, to raiſe and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. Several of them have been convicted of fraud and impoſture, not only here in England, in times of Popery, and at the beginning of the reformation: but in other countries, where that religion bears ſway.

And it is obſervable, that the greateſt part of the hiſtory of theſe miracles, which they call legends, were written in the romance-age, and much in the ſame ſtyle, with the like wantonneſs and extravagancy of fancy, and fulſom abſurdity of invention, and it is to be feared with the like regard of truth. And I know not whether romances had not their name, as well as their original, from theſe Roman legends, of which they are exact copies and imitations; and as theſe were ſacred ſo thoſe were a ſort of civil legends, in which they re-

preſente

presented their heroes doing the like absurd feats and miracles in chivalry, as their saints in their legends are said to do in religion; and they were both written by the lazy and unlearned monks, and by them dressed up and fitted to the gust of those ignorant and superstitious ages.

And yet the legends or lying wonders have not only been put into the hands of the people, but lessons out of them have been taken, as out of the scriptures, and distributed into the public offices of their church, to be read there, as the scriptures are, and instead of them; only with this difference, that the people are permitted to have the scriptures only in an unknown tongue, but the legends, out of which these lessons are taken, they are permitted to have at home in their own tongue; as if there were no danger of error and heresy from false stories, but only from the word of truth. And herein is remarkably fulfilled that prophecy concerning the followers of Antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 11. That *because they received not the truth in the love of it, God would send them strong delusions,* ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, *the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie.* And how could they more solemnly declare the belief and love of lies, than by putting these ridiculous fables into the public offices of the church, in place of the holy scriptures; and at the same time that they deny to the people the use of the scriptures in a known tongue, to permit them the use, and to recommend to them the reading of these lying legends, out of which these ridiculous lessons are taken?

Thirdly, The miracles of the church of Rome, supposing several of them to be true, have such marks and characters upon them, as render it very suspicious that they are not operations of God, or good spirits; but the *working of Satan.* If any man have but the patience to rake into these dunghills, and to read over these legends, even as they have by the later collectors and compilers been purged and reformed, he shall find the miracles recited in them, to be generally of one stamp, very foolish and absurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any necessity, upon no good occasion, to no wise end, and purpose; so that one may know them by their very countenances, to be the tricks and pranks of the

the devil; and not the great and glorious works of God, such as are the miracles recorded in the holy scriptures.

Fourthly, The miracles of the church of Rome, taking them for true, are very impertinently and unseasonably wrought. When and where there is no need and occasion for them, they are very rife and frequent: but where there is greatest occasion for them, and most reason to expect them, they are either not at all, or very rarely so much as pretended to. In times and places where their religion did most absolutely bear sway, and few or none durst oppose it, and where the doctrines, which they pretend to confirm by these miracles, were most generally believed, as in those long, dark, and ignorant times before the reformation, and now in Italy and Spain, where the inquisition forceth them all to be of one belief, or to profess to be so; in these times and places, where there was least need and occasion for miracles, then and there did they most abound, even more, if we may believe their histories, for several ages before the reformation, than in the times of our Saviour and his apostles. But since the reformation, and that many of their doctrines are called in question, and disbelieved, miracles are grown rare, and almost ceased, even in Popish countries, and they have had but very ill success with those few they have pretended to; witness the miracle, at Angiers in France, of a child appearing over the altar in the time of mass, to convince all people of the doctrine of transubstantiation, with which the Papists made such a noise here in England about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at last was discovered to be an artificial juggle and contrivance of some cunning priest, and published to the world for a cheat, by the honest and worthy Bishop of that place.

But where there seems to be most need of them, they are most wanting; as for the conversion of Heathens, and the conviction of heretic infidels. For the conversion of Heathens, in which case, if men did sincerely design the propagation of the true and uncorrupted Christianity, I do not see why miracles might not yet reasonably be expected; but yet for all this, we hear of very few miracles, not so much as the gift of tongues,

tongues, even upon this occasion. In the first planting of the West Indies, we hear of no miracles, except the most prodigious cruelties that ever were in the world, to the infinite scandal of the Christian name. And in the East Indies, and China, Xaverius and the first missionaries speak with no assurance of any miracles wrought by them; and since that time they have so depraved the Christian religion there, by concealing a most essential part of it, the death and sufferings of our Saviour, as if they were *ashamed of the cross of Christ*, that it is not credible, that God should vouchsafe the countenance of miracles to those who *preach another gospel.*

And then for the conviction of heretics, (as they are pleased to call us Protestants), one would think miracles, since they have that power, would be very proper for that purpose to be wrought among them; as now here in England, where they are continuallly endeavouring (but especially of late with more than usual vigour and hopes) to restore their religion: and yet for all this we cannot prevail with them to favour us with the sight of one miracle, in order to our conviction; but if they have any, they keep them private among themselves, though both reason and scripture tells us, *that miracles were not intended for them that believe; but to convince them that believe not.*

Fifthly, He from whom, of all persons in that church, we might expect the most and greatest miracles, does not, so far as I can learn, pretend at all to that gift; I mean, the head of their church, the Pope, who, both, as he is vicar of Christ, and successor of St Peter in his full power and office, or if he be not his successor, yet as he is his shadow, and pretends to be his successor, might fairly pretend to a power of miracles above any in that church; and I have often wondered why he does not: but it seems he contents himself with infallibility, which is privilege and power enough for one man; and indeed if he had it, and could satisfy others that he hath it, that would serve his turn without miracles: but the mischief of it is, there is no other external evidence, and which can reasonably satisfy others of any man's inspiration or infallibility, but miracles;

and therefore the Pope hath done very unadvisedly, in pretending to one without the other, when he hath the same right and title to both, that is, none at all.

Sixthly, Most of the doctrines in difference between us and the church of Rome, which they chiefly pretend to confirm by these miracles, are not capable of being confirmed by them. There are three sorts of doctrines, two of which are in their own nature incapable of being confirmed by a miracle, and a third, upon supposition of its contrariety to the Christian doctrine, which hath already had an unquestionable divine confirmation.

1. No doctrine which is contrary to sense, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle; as transubstantiation; which because it necessarily requires the renouncing of our senses in order to the belief of it, for that very reason miracles can give no credit to it. For that which depends on the certainty of sense, as miracles certainly do, can be no competent argument to prove that which is contrary to sense, as transubstantiation evidently is.

2. No doctrine that does countenance or injoin idolatry, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle. This is evident from Deut. xiii. where Moses supposeth that a prophet might work a sign or a wonder; but if it was to seduce them from the worship of the true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols, in that case they were not to hearken to him, notwithstanding he wrought a miracle; but the church of Rome teacheth idolatry in their worship of images, and of the host, and in the invocation of saints and angels.

3. No doctrine contrary to any part of the Christian doctrine, which hath already received an unquestionable divine confirmation, is capable of being confirmed by the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome, if they were real. For I hope they have not the face to pretend their miracles to be equal to those of our Saviour and his apostles, either for the certainty, or greatness of them; and I have already shewn, that they notoriously want both the credit and certainty of our Saviour's miracles, and the marks of their divinity.

Now,

Now, several of the doctrines of that church are directions contrary to, or inconsistent with the doctrines of Christianity. Their endeavour to conceal from people the doctrine of the gospel, contained in the holy scriptures, is a notorious contradiction to the design of the gospel, and to that particular miracle whereby the knowledge of it was conveyed to the world, the gift of tongues; and then the service of God in an unknown tongue, which is inconsistent with true devotion, contrary to edification, and to the plain scope and design of a whole chapter of St Paul to the Corinthians. And so likewise is the communion in one kind, to our Saviour's express institution; and the repetition of Christ's sacrifice, to as express a declaration of the apostle to the Hebrews to the contrary, as is possible for words to make.

Seventhly and *lastly*, which falls heaviest upon them of all, the chief prophecies of the New Testament, which are concerning false prophets, and concerning Antichrist, have marked him out by this character, that he should be a great worker of miracles, and magnify himself upon this pretence. Matth. xxiv. 24. *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* And 2 Thess. ii. 9. 10. St Paul foretels there, that in the great degeneracy and falling away of the Christian church, *the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of lies*, that is, either false miracles, or miracles wrought to confirm false doctrines, and *with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness*, all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falsehood and imposture. And certainly nothing was ever more visible than these are in the church of Rome; whether we consider their impudent forgeries of writings, which they have not the face now to deny, or the nature and character of their miracles. So that though Bellarmine is pleased to make miracles one of the marks of the true church, yet the miracles of the church of Rome, if we consider all the circumstances of them, are one of the plainest marks of Antichrist, and the very brand of the beast, as we find him described, Rev. xiii. 13. 14. *And he doth great*

wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.

And now the church of Rome may be allowed to work miracles; and yet divine miracles, such as were wrought for the first confirmation of Christianity, may be ceased in the church; which is a sufficient answer to the objection, and upon the whole matter shews, that the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome, are so far from giving any confirmation to her doctrines, that they are rather an evident proof that she is the apostate and Antichristian church.

I might now draw two or three inferences from this whole discourse. As,

I. We have great reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in the dispensation of the gospel, that by the sending down of his Holy Spirit to endow the first publishers of this heavenly doctrine with such miraculous gifts and powers, he hath given such abundant testimony to the truth of our religion, and such firm grounds for our faith to rely upon.

II. The consideration of what hath been said, conviniceth men of the great sin of infidelity, and the unreasonableness of it, after so clear conviction and demonstration as God hath given to the world of the truth of Christianity.

III. and lastly, They who believe the gospel, are utterly inexcusable, if they do not obey it, and live according to it. For this is the great end of all the miracles which God hath wrought for the confirmation of Christianity, that, by the belief of the gospel, men might be wrought to *the obedience of faith*, and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the Son of God by so many miracles hath planted and preserved in the world. But these I have * discoursed of on another occasion, and therefore shall insist upon them no farther at this time.

* See sermon 192.

SER-

SERMON CCXXXII.

The advantages of truth, in oppoſition to error.

1 JOHN iv. 4. 5.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

IN the beginning of this chapter, the Apoſtle cautions Chriſtians againſt the falſe teachers, and falſe prophets, intending more eſpecially thoſe of the Gnoſtic ſect, as is plain from the ſcope of the whole epiſtle, who were ſo buſy to ſeduce Chriſtians to their impious ways, and to tempt them to apoſtatize from the Chriſtian religion to the Heathen idolatry, for fear of perſecution.

And to encourage them who had hitherto continued in the truth, and reſiſted the ſeducing arts of thoſe falſe prophets, ſtill to perſevere in their holy profeſſion and practice, he tells them what advantages they who have embraced the truth and lived according to it, have above thoſe who ſeduce men to errors, or are ſeduced by them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* That which gives truth, and the profeſſors of it, the advantage over error and ſeducers, is, that truth is from God, and the Spirit of God dwells in thoſe who ſincerely embrace and obey it.

Ye are of God; that is, ye are taught by him, and inſtructed in the doctrine which is from God, and reliſh divine truth, which our Saviour calls *ſavouring the*

things which are of God, in oppoſition to *the things of the world,* the luſts and intereſts of the world, which ſway and rule in thoſe falſe prophets and ſeducing ſpirits. For ſo it follows in the next verſe, *They are of the world;* they are acted by worldly luſts and intereſts: *therefore ſpeak they of the world;* they teach things ſuitable to their worldly affections and intereſts; *and the world heareth them,* they who are of the ſame temper, are ſeduced and led away by them.

So that the Apoſtle's deſign in theſe words, is plainly to ſhew the great advantage which truth and the ſincere profeſſors of it have above error, and the teachers and diſciples of it.

Ye are of God. This phraſe is very frequently, and very peculiarly uſed by St John; it ſignifies to belong to God in a ſpecial and peculiar manner, and is the ſame with being *born of God,* and being *the children of God,* chap. iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God.* Where you ſee, *to be of God,* and *to be the children of God,* are the ſame thing: and ſo *to be the children of the devil,* and *to be of the devil,* are by this apoſtle uſed in the ſame ſenſe, chap. iii. 8. *He that committeth ſin, is of the devil.* And ver. 12. *Cain who was of that wicked one,* that is, *a child of the devil,* as he had called ſuch before, ver. 10. And becauſe children do reſemble their parents in nature and diſpoſition, therefore thoſe who are of a divine temper and diſpoſition, who reliſh the things of God, and are apt to embrace the truths of God when they are duly propounded to them, are ready to be taught of God, are ſaid likewiſe *to be of God,* John viii. 47. *He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, becauſe ye are not of God.* So here in the text, *ye are of God;* ye are of a temper and diſpoſition apt to reliſh divine things, ready to embrace the truths of God, and ye have entertained them, and are his children, and are led by his Spirit, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in you; and this makes you victorious. *Ye have overcome them.* He had ſpoken immediately before of falſe prophets and Antichriſt, by which he doth point out not one particular perſon, but the whole

whole number and faction of false teachers, as he tells us, chap. ii. 18. that *now there are many Antichrists. Ye are of God, and have overcome them*, this hath enabled you to resist those seducing spirits, and made you too hard for them, that *ye are of God; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The force of the reasoning is this, *Ye are of God*, that is, ye are taught of God, and have received his doctrine, and are born again by the word of God, and are his children, and being his children, ye have his Spirit; and the Spirit of truth and of God is a stronger principle, than that spirit of error and seduction which is in the world, that is, the devil. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The Spirit of truth is more powerful than the spirit of error and seduction; and consequently they that are of God, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, are able to overcome all the temptations of the world to apostasy from the truth.

My work, at this time, shall be to shew what advantage good men, and those who sincerely embrace and obey truth, have to secure them in the ways of truth and holiness, against all the temptations of the devil and the world. I say, in the ways of truth and holiness, because there is a strict connection between a hearty embracing of the truth of God, and a sincere obedience to it. And the Apostle speaks of both, in opposition to the Gnostics, who did not only endeavour to seduce men to apostasy from the Christian faith, but likewise from the practice of a holy life. Now, to secure men against temptations to both these, they who *are of God*, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, have a great advantage, because that spirit and principle which rules and sways in them, is more powerful than that spirit which rules in the world, and in the children of disobedience. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;* and that in these three respects.

First, Divine truth carries greater evidence along with it.

Secondly, The motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness are more operative and powerful.

Thirdly, There is a greater and more immediate assistance accompanies the truth of God, and they who entertain

entertain it are acted by a more powerful principle than that which is in the world.

First, Divine truth carries greater evidence along with it; as will appear if we consider these three things.

I. The doctrines that are from God have more intrinsic goodness in them, and teach such things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him.

II. The external confirmation of these doctrines is greater, and hath more conviction in it.

III. The Spirit of God doth illuminate the minds of good men, and is concerned to lead them into the truth, and to secure them from dangerous and damnable errors.

I. The doctrines which are from God have a more intrinsical goodness in them, and teach such things as are most worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. Whoever supposeth God to make a revelation of himself to men, whereby to conduct them to happiness, must, in all reason, suppose such a divine doctrine to contain plain rules and directions to that end, and powerful helps, motives, and encouragements to enable and excite men to the observation of those rules. For a man would naturally reason, that God who is so infinitely good, would, in revealing his will to men, aim at no other end but the happiness of his creatures: and that he being infinitely wise as well as good, the means would be proportionable, and consequently that the laws and precepts which he gives would apparently tend to the happiness of mankind: and because, if men have immortal souls, and are designed to live for ever, their greatest happiness is that of another world; therefore it is reasonable to conclude, that those rules and directions should principally regard the eternal happiness of men in another life, and in subserviency to that, should respect likewise the temporal happiness of men in this world.

And such laws and rules being supposed, the next thing to be expected is, that God should consider the condition and circumstances of persons to whom these laws are given; and if they be averse to them, that they

they ſhould be awakened and quickened to the obſervance of them, by ſuch motives and encouragements as are proper and powerful to that end; and if they be weak and impotent to the performance of what God's laws require, that they ſhould be enabled and aſſiſted by a proportionable ſtrength.

Now, the doctrine of the Chriſtian religion, which our bleſſed Saviour revealed to the world, and, as we Chriſtians ſay, by divine commiſſion and authority, hath all theſe marks and characters of divinity upon it. The laws of it are plain and obvious to the common underſtanding of mankind; all men know what the precepts of piety, and goodneſs, and mercy, and righteouſneſs, and integrity, and truth, and faithfulneſs, of meekneſs, and humility, and patience, and forgiveneſs, and forbearance, and charity, mean; and ſo I might inſtance in temperance and chaſtity, and all thoſe other virtues and graces which the Chriſtian religion requires of us, and recommends to us. Theſe all tend to the advancement and perfection of our natures, and make us like to God, and capable of the enjoyment of him in the next life; and beſides this, they do apparently conduce in all reſpects to our temporal happineſs in this world. And excepting the caſe of perſecution, (to which God hath promiſed abundant recompenſe in another world), the practice of theſe virtues is evidently to the advantage of particular perſons in this world, and to the peace and happineſs of human ſociety.

And becauſe of the great corruption of human nature, and the ſtrong inclination of it to vice, the goſpel offers proportionable arguments and encouragements to men to perſuade them to their duty; an act of oblivion and pardon for what is paſt; perfect reconciliation to God in and through the merits and mediation of our bleſſed Saviour; and the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another world; which to men that believe the immortality of their ſouls, and are not ſtupidly inſenſible of their intereſt, are the moſt powerful conſiderations in the world to take men off from ſin, and to bring them to goodneſs.

And becauſe the corruption of human nature hath brought a great weakneſs and impotency upon mankind;

God

God is pleased in the gospel to offer to men the powerful assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit, to enable them to perform all this which he requires of them. And beyond this, what can we expect God should discover to men, in order to their happiness in this world, or the other? And in all these respects the doctrine of the gospel, revealed from heaven by the Son of God, hath, to any impartial considerer, infinitely the advantage of Paganism or Mahometism, or any other doctrine or institution that ever the world was acquainted withal.

But now, if we bring the doctrines of false prophets and seducing spirits, whom St John calls Antichrists, to this trial, we shall find that they are quite of another stamp, destitute of goodness, and calculated not for the happiness and benefit of men, but for base and unworthy ends; whereby it is evident that the teachers of them are *not of God, but of the world*; *and therefore they speak from the world, and the world heareth them.* And of this I will give two instances; one in those false teachers the Gnostics, intended by the apostle in this epistle; and the other in a sort of seducers nearer to us in our own times.

As for the Gnostics, besides their contradicting and virtual renouncing the main principles of Christianity, by denying that Christ was really come in the flesh, or that he really died, or rose, affirming all this to be only in appearance; the sum of their doctrine was either a heap of unintelligible words and phrases, under a pretence of high mystery; or a doctrine of liberty, as to all manner of vice and wickedness, under a pretence of perfection, and that whatever they did, they could not sin; both which at the first sight are as plain evidence as any reasonable man can desire, that such a doctrine could not be from God; nothing being more unlikely to be a divine revelation, than such absurd and confused stuff as no man can understand, and which have no tendency to make men better. But above all, nothing can be more unworthy of God, nor more unlikely to proceed from him, than such a doctrine as gives encouragement to vice and wickedness of life, under what pretence soever it be. For what can be more contrary to God, and a greater affront to the reason of mankind, than

than to let men loose to do the vilest and lewdest things, under pretence of perfection in goodness?

The other instance I intend is nearer at hand, and concerns us more, and that is in the church of Rome, and those false teachers which she sends abroad into the world, and which at this day swarm among us; and never did any character more unluckily agree to any sort of men, than this of the Apostle does to that church and the teachers of it, that *they are of the world, and therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them.*

In which words there are three remarkable characters given of false prophets and teachers.

1. That they are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design; *they are of the world.*

2. That they teach things suitable to their worldly interest and design, and therefore they speak ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, *from the world*, according to that worldly spirit that acts them and rules in them.

3. Those that hearken to them are a sort of people like themselves, of worldly affections and interests; *the world heareth them.*

1. They are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design of greatness and ambition, of dominion and tyranny, of riches and wealth. Any man that considers the church of Rome at this day, and by what steps and degrees, by what worldly ways and unworthy means she hath attained to that power, and wealth, and greatness, to that dominion and tyranny, which now for several hundred of years she hath exercised, not only over the consciences of men in the most cruel manner, but even over temporal princes and states, in commanding their treasures and armies, in deposing kings, and disposing of their kingdoms, and in all imaginable instances of secular dominion and tyranny, cannot but be satisfied by what spirit they are acted, and that they as visibly carry on a worldly interest and design, as the most ambitious secular prince ever did.

2. They teach things suitable to their worldly designs and interests. Let but any man impartially survey those which are the proper doctrines of the Romish church, and

and which we challenge for innovation and corruption of the truly ancient, catholic, and Christian doctrine, and it will, at first sight, be evident to him, whither these doctrines tend, and that they do not serve the ends of religion, but of worldly greatness and dominion. What greater instance of ambition, than the claim of the universal supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all Christians and churches in the world, without the least ground, or indeed colour of ground, either from scripture or antiquity; and not only of an universal spiritual power over Christians, but of an indirect temporal power over princes, in order to spiritual ends, which may be extended to any thing, and hath been upon occasion, to the donation of kingdoms, and the deposing of princes, and the transferring of temporal dominion from lawful and hereditary princes, to those who had no manner of right or title? What more arrogant and directly tending to the enslaving of mankind, than their pretence to infallibility, which yet they could never agree among themselves where to place? What greater tyranny can be exercised over mankind, than to oblige them to an implicit faith, and blind obedience to believe what the church believes, though they do not know what it is; and to do what the church commands, though they doubt never so much of the lawfulness of it? than to hide the word of God from them, and to lock it up in an unknown tongue, and to deter them from the free use of that which was designed by God to be the great instrument of the salvation of mankind? than not to let men exercise their understandings in the service of God; nor when they join in public prayers, to suffer them to know what it is they ask of God; as if the priests lips were so to preserve knowledge, as to keep it all to themselves, and not to make use of it for the benefit and edification of the people? And lastly, to impose upon men, under pain of damnation, the belief of doctrines, not only contrary to the true sense of scripture, but to all the sense and reason of mankind, as is the doctrine of transubstantiation? How is it possible to bring people into a greater subjection to the priests, and dependence upon them, than by auricular confession, and that unreasonable doctrine

trine of making the efficacy of the ſacraments to depend upon the intention of the prieſt; and conſequently to put it into the power of a malicious and bad man to damn all his pariſh? And to mention but one thing more, what better contrivance could be thought of to enrich the church, and drain the purſes of the people, than their doctrines of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, of indulgences and ſatisfaction, and their form of ſins and vices of all kinds, called *the tax of the apoſtolic chamber?* Can any man think that theſe and ſuch like doctrines are of God, which do ſo directly ſerve the ends of covetouſneſs and ambition? Any one that does not wilfully ſhut his eyes, may plainly ſee that ſuch doctrines and ſuch teachers are of the world, and that they ſpeak and teach theſe things out of a worldly intereſt and deſign.

And here I might take notice likewiſe, that *they ſpeak from the world* alſo in another ſenſe, by ſhewing what worldly and indirect means, not to ſay wicked and ſinful arts, they commonly make uſe of to make diſciples and gain proſelytes, by flattery and falſehood, by concealing and miſrepreſenting their own doctrines and practices, by defaming their adverſaries with known fictions and calumnies, tempting men from their religion by promiſes of temporal advantages, which, when they have gained them, they do not always perform and make good. Can any thing be more oppoſite to the genius of true religion, than to promote it by means ſo plainly contrary to the very nature and deſign of it?

3. Thoſe who hearken to them, and are ſeduced by them, are generally like themſelves; *they ſpeak from the world, and the world heareth them.* Not but that men of very honeſt and ſincere minds may be ſeduced into great errors, through prejudice or weakneſs, or a melancholy ſuperſtition: but generally ſuch a religion as is calculated for the promoting of ſecular intereſt, and is carried on by ſecular arts, does gain upon carnal and worldly minds; and it is uſually ſome worldly conſideration or other that prevails with men to embrace and profeſs it. A religion, that can find out ways to ſave men without ſincere repentance and a good life, is very fit to make proſelytes in the world; they that teach ſuch doc-

trines ſpeak from the world, and the world is very apt to hear them.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing, whereby it appears, that divine truth carries great evidence along with it, namely, that the doctrines which are from God have more intrinſical goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. I will be briefer in the reſt.

II. The external confirmation of divine doctrines is greater, and carries more conviction along with it. By external confirmation, I mean chiefly that of miracles. And though the Pagan religion pretended to ſome, and our Saviour plainly foretold, that *Antichriſts and falſe prophets ſhould ariſe, and ſhould ſhew ſigns and wonders*; and St Paul hath told us, that *the man of ſin ſhould come with ſigns, and wonders, and mighty power*; yet none of theſe are of any great conſideration, in compariſon of the many, and great, and unqueſtionable miracles which were ſo univerſally wrought for the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian religion, and continued for ſome ages; for they bear no manner of proportion to them, neither for the nature, nor number, nor circumſtances of them, ſo as to ſhake or weaken any man's belief of the Chriſtian religion, which had ſo much a greater confirmation given to it; eſpecially when our Saviour did foretel that falſe prophets ſhould do ſome things of this kind. For after a religion is eſtabliſhed by plain and unqueſtionable miracles, ſuch as for their number, nature, publicneſs, and continuance, and all imaginable circumſtances of advantage, were never upon any occaſion wrought in the world; I ſay, after this, it is not reaſonable, that one or two ſingle miracles or wonders pretended to, or really wrought by a falſe prophet, ſhould bring in queſtion the truth of a religion confirmed by a long ſeries of the greateſt and moſt unqueſtionable miracles.

Beſides that the doctrine of it is ſuch as is worthy of God, and moſt likely to proceed from him *.

As for the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, they are generally ſo fantaſtical and ridiculous,

* See of this more at large in the three laſt foregoing ſermons.

and

and so unlike the works of God, and wrought so to no end and purpose, not among unbelievers, for their conviction, which was always the great end of miracles, but among themselves, and so destitute of credit, that the wisest among themselves are so far from believing them that they are heartily ashamed of them; so that we need not trouble ourselves about them, for they are not like to give any great confirmation to any doctrine, which stands in so much need of confirmation themselves.

III. Besides the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the external confirmation of them by miracles, which is a great advantage to the reception of them, the Spirit of God doth likewise illuminate good men, and those who are desirous to know the truth, and hath promised to lead them into it, and to assist them in discerning between truth and falsehood. So our Saviour hath assured us, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Beside that the doctrines which are from God do commonly carry the marks and characters of their own divinity upon them, the providence of God is likewise particularly concerned, that good men, and those who are of honest minds, and sincerely desirous to know the truth, should not be deceived in matters of so great consequence to the happiness and salvation of mankind. To the same purpose is that promise, John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* God is always ready to reveal his will to those who are sincerely desirous to do it, and will not suffer men of honest minds to err dangerously in matters wherein their eternal salvation is concerned.

Thus you see what advantage the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction; that divine truth carries greater evidence along with it, both in respect of the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the great confirmation that is given to them, and the extraordinary illuminations of God's Spirit, which is wont to accompany the truths of God to the

minds of good men, who are ready and disposed to give entertainment to divine truth.

I should now have proceeded to the second advantage which the spirit of truth hath above the Spirit of seduction, namely, that the motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are more powerful and operative upon the minds of men, than the motives to the contrary.

And then, thirdly, that those who embrace and obey the truth of God have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than any is in the world. And this seems to be more especially the meaning of that in the text, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* But these I shall not now enter upon.

SERMON CCXXXIII.

The advantages of truth, in opposition to error.

1 JOHN iv. 4. 5.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

The second sermon on this text.

I Proceed to the second advantage which the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, namely, that the motives which good men have to persuade them to adhere to truth and holiness are more powerful, than the motives to the contrary. They who embraced the Christian religion did firmly believe the eternal rewards and punishments of another world; and

and this principle of faith, being fixed and rooted in them, made them victorious over all the temptations of the world, over all the allurments and terrors of it; because they were fully persuaded of the happiness and misery of another world; the happiness of those who continued stedfast in the faith and obedience of the gospel, and the dreadful misery and punishment of those who disobeyed the gospel of Christ, or apostatized from the profession of it. Hence it was that they were not to be moved by any temporal considerations, either of ease or advantage, or of trouble and persecution in this world. Their eternal interest lay so near their hearts, and they were so fully possessed with the belief of the everlasting rewards and punishments of another life, that they overlooked the goods and evils of this life; and all temporal considerations put into the scales against their everlasting interest, were of no weight and moment with them.

And this our apostle very particularly insists upon in this epistle, chap. v. 4. 5. *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world*; the children of God are victorious over the temptations of the world; and then he tells us what it is that makes them so; *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* The believing that *Jesus is the Son of God*, infers the belief of his doctrine, and consequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal recompense of another world, which whosoever firmly believes, will be able to resist and overcome all the temptations of this world. For by the belief of the Christian religion, and faith in the Son of God, we are fully assured of the reality and certainty of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world, though they be future and at a distance; and a firm persuasion of these things makes them in some sort present to us as to their efficacy and operation: for to a wise and considerate man, a great good, or a great evil, which he believes will certainly befall him, according as he manageth his affairs well or ill, though it be at some distance, is of greater force than a far lesser good or evil, which is present and nearer at hand. And of this we

see many instances in the temporal concerns of men. A prudent man will forego his present ease and pleasure, and part with a present advantage, lay down ready money, upon the certain prospect of a far greater benefit that will come to him some years hence; and will undergo present pain and trouble, to prevent a far greater mischief and inconvenience; and upon this principle of the belief of future good and evil, all the great affairs of the world are managed. Upon this principle men plough and sow, and venture their estates in traffic to foreign parts, and trust out their present stock, and purchase reversions, and take physic, and cut off a limb, and run all those hazards of estate and life, which we see men every day do; and all this for the securing of some great advantage, or the preventing of some great mischief, which though it be future and at a distance, yet they probably or certainly foresee will happen to them.

And this principle is so much the stronger, and of greater force and efficacy, in matters of greater moment and importance, where the good hoped for, or the evil feared, is infinitely great, and concerns us for ever. If we firmly believe the reality and certainty of it, no temporal advantage or affliction can come in competition with them, in the calculation and account of a wise man; because there is no proportion between finite and infinite, between the goods and evils which are temporal, and those which are eternal; though the one be seen, and the other not seen; though the one be present and near to us, and the other future, and at a great distance.

Upon this principle the first Christians continued firm and stedfast in the belief and obedience of the gospel, and were bold and open in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the cruel assaults of persecution, though they hazarded the loss of all that was dear to them in this world, and exposed themselves to the suffering of whatever is grievous and terrible to flesh and blood. They *gloried in tribulation;* and did not only patiently submit to the greatest sufferings, but heartily praised God, who *accounted them worthy to suffer for his name: they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance;*

they

they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and when they were haraſſed with all the evils and calamities of human life, yet they *fainted not, knowing that their light affliction, which was but for a moment, would work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; having their minds fixed, *not upon the things which are ſeen, but the things which are not ſeen*; *the things which are ſeen being but temporal, but the things which are not ſeen being eternal.*

Thus they overcame the world, not by the force and power of this world, but by the belief of another world, and of the mighty rewards and puniſhments of it. And this *faith purified their hearts*, and reformed their lives, and made them ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in their holy profeſſion, and raiſed their minds above all the temptations and terrors of preſent and ſenſible things.

Let us now ſee on the contrary what kind of motives and arguments falſe teachers uſe to ſeduce men to their pernicious ways. *They ſpeak from the world*, and commonly make uſe of baſe, and low, and temporal conſiderations, of little tricks and devices, and *all deceiveableneſs of unrighteouſneſs*, as the ſcripture calls it, to make diſciples and gain proſelytes. They terrify them with temporal dangers and inconveniencies, and preſent to them ſuffering, and perſecution, and death, in all their frightful ſhapes, to deter them from profeſſion of the true religion: they ſet before them all manner of worldly baits and allurements, eaſe, and wealth, and preferment; they promiſe them liberty from the ſtrictneſs of thoſe laws and rules which religion ties them up to. By theſe arts and arguments the Gnoſtics of old uſed to tempt men from Chriſtianity, and to ſhake their conſtancy in the profeſſion of it; and the ſame ways are ſtill put in practice by ſeducers at this day: they tell men of a glorious church, that hath great power and intereſt in the world; they amuſe them with a great deal of outward pomp and ceremony; they promiſe them preferment and great worldly advantages, by coming over to them; they threaten them with fire and faggot, with perſecutions and maſſacres, and where they have power, they hold them faſt when they have gained them,

them, by the terror of an inquisition; they promise them liberty, and what by the looseness of their casuistical divinity, and by the easiness of their penances and absolutions, and the cheats of their indulgences, they have devised ways to reconcile almost the worst life that any man can lead, with fair hopes of getting to heaven at last. They tell them indeed, they must make some stop in purgatory: but they have so many ways to release men from those sufferings, as do very much abate the terror of them; to any man that hath but credulity enough to believe them: for besides the vast treasure of merits in the common bank of the church, which the Pope hath in his disposal, and which no body ought to doubt but that they are faithfully employed by him for the ease and deliverance of souls in purgatory; I say, besides these, there are so many particular ways of effecting this business, that a man of ordinary discretion, with an indifferent purse, may so order the matter, that he shall only pass through purgatory, but need not make any stay in that place of torments.

But though these be their common motives and inducements to draw men to their communion, yet they do not wholly omit the arguments taken from the eternal happiness and misery of men in another world: for to give them their due, there are no people in the world more prodigal of eternal salvation and damnation: they promise the one upon the easiest terms, and threaten the other upon the least displeasure: if a man be in their communion, he can hardly fail of salvation; and if he be out of it, and differ from them in the least point of faith, though but of their own making, he is sure to be damned, though he had the graces and virtues, the sanctity and charity of an angel: and this is the true reason why these arguments which are so powerful in themselves, signify so little from their mouths; because every man that hath read the Bible, and understands the Christian religion, plainly sees that they have made terms of salvation and damnation quite different from those which God hath constituted: so that these motives, which are so strong and mighty in themselves, quite lose their edge and force, when they are managed by seducers

seducers in so undue a manner, and to ends and purposes so cross to the main design of Christianity. This is the second advantage which the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, that the motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are really in themselves more powerful than the motives to error and seduction.

Thirdly, Those who sincerely embrace and obey the truth of God, have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than that which is in the world; and this seems more especially to be the meaning of the reason here given in the text, why the Spirit of truth is victorious over the spirit of error and seduction: *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world;* that is, the spirit which is in good men is more powerful than the devil, that evil spirit which inspires and acts *the children of disobedience.*

For the farther explication of this, I shall do these three things.

I. Shew that there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the devil, very active and powerful in good and bad men.

II. That the Spirit of God, which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world.

III. In what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men.

I. That there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. This is very credible in the general, from the universal tradition and consent of mankind, in the belief of good and evil spirits attending men, and prompting them to good and evil: but we who embrace the revelation of the gospel have a much firmer and surer ground for it, nothing being more plain and frequent in scripture, than that the Holy Spirit of God guides and assists good men in doing the will of God; and that the devil *works in the children of disobedience*, and is always ready to tempt men to, and promote any evil action or design. From hence it is that the scripture does almost every where

ascribe

aſcribe all good motions and actions to the operation and influence of God's grace and Holy Spirit upon the minds of men; and the ſins of men to the temptation and ſuggeſtion of the devil; and this is ſo well known to any one converſant in the holy ſcripture, that I need not cite particular texts for the proof of it.

It is true indeed, that the motions of God's Holy Spirit, and the ſuggeſtions of the devil, are very ſecret to us, and imperceptible by us, ſo that no man can ſay certainly, that this good inclination or action is an immediate motion of God's Holy Spirit in me, or that evil thought and deſign is an immediate ſuggeſtion of the devil; it is ſufficient for us, that we are aſſured from divine revelation in general, that the Spirit of God very frequently does, and is always ready to aſſiſt good men in the doing or ſuffering of God's will; as the evil ſpirit, where God permits him, is always buſy to tempt and ſeduce men to evil. And this ought not to be ſtrange to us, becauſe our Saviour hath expreſsly told us, that the Spirit of God works in men after an imperceptible manner: John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Though we do not know the manner of the Spirit's working, nor perceive the operations of it upon our minds, yet we find the effects of it in the renovation and ſanctification of our hearts. Thus by undeniable arguments men are aſſured of a divine providence governing the world, though men do not always ſee, nor can make out to others, the particular interpoſitions of it, ſo as to ſay that this or that was an immediate effect of divine providence. To know certainly that a thing is, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould be able to give a particular account of all its operations, and the manner of them; theſe may be hidden from us, and yet we may be ſufficiently aſſured by other arguments that there is ſuch a thing. Men are ſure they have ſouls, though they can give no account how the actions of underſtanding, and remembrance, and ſenſation are produced by them: ſo it is in the preſent caſe, we are ſufficiently aſſured from the word of God, that good and bad ſpirits have a great influence

fluence upon the minds of men, though we be not conſcious to their operations, and the manner of them.

II. The Spirit of God which is in good men is greater than he that is in the world; he is more able and ready to aſſiſt men to good purpoſes, than the devil is to tempt and help forward that which is evil. And this will appear, if we conſider theſe three things.

1. The Spirit of God is more powerful than the devil; and this is ſo evident in itſelf, that it needs no proof.

2. The Spirit of God is as forward and willing to aſſiſt men to good purpoſes, as the devil is to the contrary. That extremity of malice and envy, which is in evil ſpirits, does no doubt make them very forward and active to do all the miſchief they can to mankind, by tempting and ſeducing them to ſin: but on the other hand, the utmoſt perfection of goodneſs, which in God is more and greater than the malice of the devil, will incline more ſtrongly the Holy Spirit of God to pity, and aid, and help good men, than the malice of the devil can urge him to procure the harm and miſchief of mankind; and if we could ſuppoſe their will and inclinations equal, yet our comfort is, their power is not.

3. The Spirit of God hath a more free and immediate acceſs to the minds of good men, and a more intimate conjunction with, and operation upon them, than the devil. The Spirit of God is always preſent to us, and willing to dwell and abide in us, and ready to help and aſſiſt us, if we be ready to obey his dictates, and comply with his holy and bleſſed motions; if we did not reſiſt, and quench, and grieve him, he would always take up his abode and habitation in us, and would be continually exciting, and guiding, and aſſiſting us to that which is good; he knows our hearts, and ſees all the ſecrets of our ſouls; knows all our inclinations, knows our weakneſs and our danger, what aſſiſtance we want, and when it will be moſt ſeaſonable; and is as intimate to us, and as conſcious to all the motions of our ſpirits, as we ourſelves are.

But now the devil is under great reſtraint, and cannot make nearer approaches to any man than God permits him; he does not know our hearts, nor can pry into the ſecret of our thoughts. God knows, but the devil does

does but guess at the thoughts, and designs, and inclinations of men; he hath no power over us, nor any access to us, but what we give him, or God permits. By obedience to God's will, and resisting the temptations of the devil to sin and disobedience, we may not only keep out the devil, but keep him at a great distance, and make him flee from us, so that we shall have little trouble or molestation from him: for though he be unwearied in his malicious attempts to ruin our souls, yet because he cannot be every where, he haunts those most where he hath greatest hopes of success; and is too eager and intent upon mischief to employ his time and temptations where he hath been often foiled, and hath reason to despair of victory. So that if all things be considered, it is our own fault if we want the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, or if the devil have any great power over us; for God does not usually, but upon great provocation, take away his Holy Spirit from men, and lay them open to the assaults and temptations of the devil. If any be *led captive by the devil at his pleasure*, it is those who have wilfully forsaken God, and *sold themselves to do wickedly*.

III. We will consider in what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men. These two ways.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect.

2. By supporting us under persecution for religion.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. These the Apostle puts together, Phil. ii. 13. *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* It is he that stirs up good inclinations in us, and carries them into effect. And this he makes an argument why we should be diligent and industrious in the work of our salvation, because God is so ready to assist us: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*

2. By supporting us under persecution for religion. In case of extraordinary temptations, and violent assaults upon our constancy in religion, by fierce and cruel persecutions, God affords immediate and extraordinary supports to good men, whereby they are many times borne

borne up under the greatest sufferings, not only with patience, but with comfort, and *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Where-ever God suffers good men to be tempted above humanity, he affords them an immediate divine assistance to bear them up, and make them victorious. So St Peter tells us, 1 Pet. iv. 4. that those who *suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them.* So likewise St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 13. speaking of those who had not yet been set upon by any sharp persecution, *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to man,* εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος, nothing but what is human, what the spirit of a man may bear: but if such a case happen, of temptation above nature, and the spirit of a man be too weak to support itself under it, God will in that case afford men immediate and extraordinary supports and comforts: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it;* and then it immediately follows, *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;* because God hath promised such an extraordinary assistance in case of persecution for religion, therefore he encourageth them to continue stedfast in the profession of Christianity, and cautions them against apostasy to the Heathen idolatry.

The inference from all this discourse, is to encourage us to continue stedfast in the truth, and in the practice of our holy religion, *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,* and not to suffer ourselves to be *shaken with every wind of doctrine, by the arts and cunning of those who lie in wait to deceive; who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away by divers lusts.* You see what kind of persons these false teachers used to proselyte; women of no virtue, of a prostitute reputation, *laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts*; a character that notoriously agrees to some seducers of our times.

Therefore let us *continue in the things which we have heard,* and not suffer ourselves to be *moved from our stedfastness.* The more we consider our religion, and compare it with the unquestionable revelation of God in the holy scriptures, the greater reason we shall see to

adhere to it. The doctrines of our religion are of God, plainly contained in his word, and such as are worthy of him, and likely to proceed from him, and tend to the good and happiness of mankind, to make men really better, and to qualify them for that happiness which God hath promised to holy souls. The doctrines of our religion are free from the suspicions of a worldly interest and design. But if we consider the doctrines and innovations of that church which pretends to be the only Christian catholic society in the world, we shall find that they are of another stamp, and of a quite contrary tendency, that they savour so rankly of a worldly interest, that any impartial man would at first sight judge them to be the contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambitious men, and that they did not look like divine truths, and doctrines that are of God, but that they are of the world, and therefore they that propagate them, and would seduce men to them, *speak from the world, and the world heareth them.*

SERMON CCXXXIV.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion; with the cause and danger of infidelity.

2 Cor. iv. 3. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The first sermon on this text.

I Shall explain these words, and then proceed to handle many things contained in them.

If our gospel be hid, or *veiled*; for by this metaphor the Apostle alludes to what he had said in the latter part

part of the foregoing chapter, concerning *the veil which was upon Moses's face, and upon the hearts of the Jews, so that they could not see to the end of that dispensation.* There was a great deal of obscurity in that administration: *But the veil is done away in Christ.* The gospel is a clear revelation, and sufficiently conspicuous in itself: and now, if it be hid from any, the fault is not in the obscurity of the object, but in the blindness of mens minds.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; to them that deserve to perish, because they will not see.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. Some of the fathers, as St Augustine, and St Chrysostom, and several of the Greek scholiasts, read these words otherwise: *In whom God hath blinded the eyes of the men of this world who believe not*; and so refer this blindness to God's permission; in which sense he is said elsewhere in scripture, *to harden mens hearts.* The reason why they chuse this reading of the words rather than the other, was in opposition to the Marcionites and Manichees; the former of which sects made use of this text to countenance their opinion of two Gods; the one of the Old Testament, whom they called *the just God*; the other of the New, whom they styled *the good God*; the former of these, say they, made the world, and is therefore here called *the God of this world.* The Manichees made use of this text to prove that the devil, whom they made the principle of all evil and imperfection, was the maker of this world, and is therefore called *the god of it.*

But there is no need why for this reason we should depart from the usual reading of the words; for there is nothing in the true importance of them, that can give countenance to these errors. For the devil, though he did not make this world, may be said to be *the god of it*, upon a very good account, because the greatest part of the world being sunk into idolatry and wickedness, were become his lot and portion, who worshipped him as God, and did his works, and therefore were part of his dominion. So St John tells us, 1 John iii. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil*; and chap. v. 19.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedneſs, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, which may be rendered more agreeably to the oppoſition which the Apoſtle intended, *is ſubject to the evil one,* is in his power, and under his dominion. According to which Plutarch tells us, that "every unreaſonable and brutiſh nature "belongs to the lot of bad ſpirits." So that in this ſenſe the devil may very well be ſaid to be *the god of this world,* as he is elſewhere called by our Saviour, the prince of this world, John xii. 31. *Now ſhall the prince of this world be caſt out;* and John xiv. 30. *The prince of this world cometh.* And ſo the Apoſtle, Eph. vi. 12. *The ruler of the darkneſs of this world.*

Leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them, ὡς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι, *leſt they ſhould ſee, or behold the light of the glorious goſpel;* for ſo Heſych tells us, that αὐγάζω αὐγάζομαι, is ὁρῶ καὶ βλέπω. It is called *the glorious goſpel of Chriſt,* becauſe of the glorious confirmation that was given to it by his miraculous reſurrection and aſcenſion, and his ſending the Holy Ghoſt into the world; and Chriſt is ſaid to be the *image of God,* becauſe the power of the Deity did ſhew forth itſelf in the miracles which he wrought.

The words being thus explained, the moſt material things that offer themſelves to our conſideration in them, are theſe three.

Firſt, The full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the goſpel, or of the Chriſtian religion, which the Apoſtle expreſſeth to us in theſe words, *the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt.*

Secondly, The cauſe of infidelity, notwithſtanding all the evidence which the goſpel carries along with it, which the Apoſtle expreſſeth in theſe words, *in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not.*

Thirdly, The dangerous ſtate of thoſe, who having the goſpel propounded to them, do not believe it. The Apoſtle tells them, they are loſt and undone: *If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that periſh.*

I begin with the firſt of theſe, namely, the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the goſpel

gospel or Christian religion. The only thing that can give us full assurance that any religion is true, is, if we can be satisfied, that it is from God; for being once satisfied of that, there can remain no doubt of the truth of any thing that comes from him, it being an essential part of the notion which every man hath of God, that he is *a God of truth.*

Now, there are two things must concur to give the mind of man full satisfaction that any religion is from God.

First, If the person that declares this religion give testimony of his divine authority, that is, that he is sent and commissioned by God to that purpose. And,

Secondly, If the religion which he declares contain nothing in it, that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God. I say, these two must concur; for though I could suppose a person to bring the highest testimony imaginable of his divine mission and authority, suppose he should work a miracle for the confirmation of his doctrine; yet if there were any thing in the doctrine plainly repugnant to the natural notions which I have of God, I could not receive it as from God; the reason of which is plainly this, I can have no assurance that that is from God, which if it were true, I should be uncertain whether there were a God or not. I cannot possibly have any greater assurance that any thing is from God, than I have that there is a God; and I have no greater assurance that there is a God, than I have of his essential perfections, as that he is good, and powerful, and wise, and just, *&c.* For by the very same arguments that I come to know that there is a God, I know likewise that he must necessarily have these perfections. So that if any thing should be offered to me as a revelation from God, which plainly contradicts those natural notions which I have of him, I must necessarily reject it, yea though it were backed with a miracle; because no man can at the same time believe that there is a God, of such and such perfections, and entertain any thing as from him, which evidently contradicts those perfections. And as this is reasonable in itself, so it is clear from scripture, Deut. xiii. 1. 2. 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and*

giveth thee a sign, or a wonder: and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. Here is the very case put, which I am speaking of; a prophet comes and preacheth the worship of idols, as the sun, moon, stars, *&c.* and for the confirmation of this he is supposed to work a miracle; and yet, notwithstanding this, we are forbid to hearken to him, because the doctrine that he brings does evidently contradict the natural notions which I have of God.

From all which it appears, that these two things must concur, to give us full satisfaction that any religion is from God, namely, first, that the person that declares this religion, gives testimony of his divine authority, that he is sent and commissioned from God to that purpose. And,

Secondly, That the religion which he declares contains nothing in it that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God.

Now, to bring this to my present purpose, I should shew these two things concerning the Christian religion.

First, As to the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world, that he was sent and commissioned by God to that purpose.

Secondly, As to the religion itself, that there is nothing in it that is repugnant to the nature of God.

I intend chiefly to speak of the first of these: for I dare say, any one that will freely and without prejudice, consider the Christian religion, as it is laid down in the scriptures, and not as it hath been abused by the wanton wits of some, and the designs of others, will find nothing in it but what is very suitable to the nature of God, and worthy of him; he shall find nothing in the propositions of faith, but what is suitable to the perfections of the divine nature, and hath a proper influence upon a godly practice; nothing in the precepts of life, but what plainly tends to the perfection of human nature, and the advantage and happiness of mankind; nothing in the arguments and motives to obedience, as, namely, the love of Christ in dying for us, the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and the rewards and punishments

ments of another world, but what is very accommodate to our nature, and suitable to the wisdom, and goodness, and justice of God; and these three, the propositions of faith, the precepts of life, the arguments and motives to obedience, do constitute the Christian religion, and make up the whole gospel. Concerning most of these, I have elsewhere treated at large; therefore I shall now apply myself chiefly to the first thing, namely, to shew that we have abundant satisfaction of the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world.

Now, because we live at a great distance from the age wherein this revelation of the gospel by Jesus Christ was made to the world, it will be requisite, for our clearer proceeding in this matter, to consider distinctly these three things.

First, What evidence those who heard this doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour had for his divine authority. And this inquiry only respects the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the Jews to whom he preached.

Secondly, What evidence those had who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apostles. And this concerns those to whom the gospel was published by the apostles after our Saviour's death.

Thirdly, What evidence after-ages, until the present time, have of this. And this properly concerns us, who live at a great distance from the times of the first publication of the gospel.

And according to these three differences of time there are likewise but three ways whereby we can come to the knowledge of matter of fact; and they are all such as are capable of giving us sufficient assurance.

The first is by the testimony of our own senses; and this was the advantage of those who heard our Saviour's doctrine, and saw his miracles.

The second by the report and relation of credible eye and ear witnesses; and this advantage those had who heard the apostles.

The third by a constant and uncontrolled relation derived down successively from one age to another, either

either by word, or writing, or both; which is the way whereby the ages, since the apostles to this day, have had the Christian religion derived down to them.

First, To consider what evidence those who heard this doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour himself might have of his divine authority. Now, there are but four ways that I can at present imagine, setting aside an internal revelation in every man's mind, whereby men may be sufficiently satisfied of the divine authority of any person.

I. If it be propheſied of him, and foretold by persons divinely inspired, that God would send such an one as his messenger and prophet into the world, and afterward such a person comes, to whom all the circumstances of those prophecies do agree.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By a power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

Now, I shall shew that those who lived in our Saviour's time, and conversed with him, were capable of satisfaction concerning his divine authority all these four ways. I shall begin with the

I. They were capable of being eye-witnesses that Christ was the great Prophet and Messenger of God, the Messias propheſied of and foretold in the Old Testament. And here I do reasonably take for granted the divine authority of the Old Testament, and that the prophecies therein contained are of divine inspiration, because those to whom our Saviour ordinarily preached, were only the Jews, who acknowledged the divine authority of those books; and therefore the accomplishment of those prophecies in the person of our Saviour, must needs be a satisfactory argument to them, that he was the Messias foretold.

Now, to shew that the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the Jews, were capable of receiving full satisfaction in this, that Jesus Christ was the Messias propheſied of in the Old Testament, I shall proceed by these steps.

1. That

1. That the prophecies of the Old Testament fix a time for the coming of the Messias; they give certain marks and signs whereby it may be known when the Messias would come; as that he should come when the government should utterly be lost from Judah. Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come;* by whom the ancient Jews did understand the Messias; and nothing but plain malice against Christ, and the Christian religion, makes the modern Jews to depart herein from the sense of their ancient masters. That he should come before the destruction of the second temple, Hag. ii. 6. 7. 8. 9. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* From whence it is plain, that this house shall remain when *the desire of all nations*, that is, the Messias, according to the interpretation of the ancient Jews, should come, and his presence should be the glory of this second temple, and make it excel the first. And much to the same purpose, Mal. iii. 1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek*, that is, the Messias, *shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.* That he should come at the end of so many weeks of years, *from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and after so many weeks of years should be cut off, and after that the city of Jerusalem and sanctuary should be destroyed and made desolate*, Dan. ix. 24. 25. 26. 27. So that you see the prophecies of the Old Testament do fix and ascertain the time of the Messias's coming, both by infallible marks and signs, concomitant and consequent, and by an exact computation of years.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the Messias is already past. And this appears,

pears, in that all those marks and signs, which it was foretold should accompany and follow the coming of the Messias, are come to pass, and the time limited for the coming of the Messias is long since expired.

For (1.) the sceptre is long since departed from Judah. The Jews are now dispersed among all nations, their government lost, their families confounded, in so much that they do not at this day know those of the tribe of Judah from others. At the captivity, the government was not utterly lost, for they had a prince of the captivity; or at least it was interrupted but for seventy years, and then it was restored to them again: but now the sceptre hath been departed, and the government lost for sixteen hundred years.

(2.) The second temple is destroyed, to which it was foretold, that *the desire of all nations should come.*

(3.) The city is destroyed and made desolate, which was foretold should be *after the cutting off of the Messias.*

(4.) The seventy weeks of years are accomplished and expired long since, which were to begin from *the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem*, and to end at the coming of *the Messias the Prince.* And whether we fix the beginning of these weeks in the first or second year of Cyrus, or in the reign of one of the Darius's and Artaxerxes's, (for by universal consent it must begin in some of them), it matters not to my present purpose; for where-ever it be fixed, these weeks are long since expired.

3. And consequently the Messias is already come. For if the predictions of the Old Testament be true, which limit his coming to a certain time, which is fixed both by infallible marks, and by an account of years, I say, if these predictions be true, that he should come at such a time, and that time is past, then he is already come.

The Jews seek to evade the force of this argument by this pitiful shift, that the promises and predictions of the Messias were not absolute, but conditional: that is, he should come at such a time, if the sins and impenitency of men did not hinder. To this I answer,

(1.) This grants that the time for the coming of the Messias is past.

(2.) The

(2.) The reason that they give why God hath deferred the accomplishment of those prophecies and promises, is, because of the impenitency and wickedness of the people of the Jews at that time; which will agree very well with the history of the gospel, and give us a very good account how they came to reject the Messias; because they were so wicked, and their unbelief and impenitency were so great at that time.

(3.) There is no such condition any where expressed in any of those prophecies.

(4.) It is unreasonable that there should be such a condition; that the impenitency of men should hinder the coming of him, who was to bring the world to repentance, that is, to do that on his part which was sufficient to that end.

(5.) Nothing could bring the veracity of God into question more, than to make such predictions conditional, as by the concurrent testimony of so many prophets have the time of their accomplishment so punctually defined, and have not either a condition expressly fixed to them, or in the nature of the thing necessarily implied: and if this were not so, any one might pretend to be a true prophet, though the event proved never so contrary to his prediction.

(6.) It appears out of the books of the Jews to have been a constant tradition among them, that the Messias should come when the state of the people was most degenerate, and there was the greatest corruption and dissolution of manners among them. And if this be so, then their wickedness and impenitency could be no obstacle and impediment to the fulfilling of the promises and predictions concerning the Messias.

I should have added, in the next place, that the prophecies and promises in the Old Testament concerning the Messias, do all exactly, both as to the time, and all other circumstances, agree to Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem, who gave himself out to be the Messias, and whom we Christians own to be so. But this I reserve for the next opportunity.

SER-

SERMON CCXXXV.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion.

2 Cor. iv. 3. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The second Sermon on this text.

IN discoursing on these words, I have begun to shew, how those who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour, might be satisfied concerning his divine authority; and I mentioned four ways by which such persons might receive full satisfaction.

I. By the agreement of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament to our Saviour.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By the power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

In discoursing of the first of these, I proceeded by these steps.

1. That the prophecies of the Old Testament did fix a time for the coming of the Messias, and gave certain marks and signs whereby it might be known when the Messias would come.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the Messias is already past.

3. And

3. And consequently, that the Messias is already come. Thus far I have gone; and now add,

4. The prophecies and promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messias do all exactly, both as to the time and all other circumstances, agree to Jesus Christ, that was born at Bethlehem, who gave himself out to be the Messias, and whom we Christians own to be so.

1. The time specified in those predictions agree to him. When he came into the world, the government was departed from Judah; for they were then in subjection to the Romans; and Herod their King, who was put into the government by the Romans, was an Idumæan. He came into the second temple, which, notwithstanding its being re-edified by Herod, might justly be accounted the same, it not having been again destroyed by any enemy, but only pulled down in order to the beautifying and enlarging of it; notwithstanding which Josephus every where calls it the same temple; for he reckons but two temples, the one, that which Solomon built, which continued till the captivity of Babylon; the other, that which Zerubbabel built, and that, he says, continued till the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. And not long after our Saviour's death, the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary were utterly demolished, and *the end thereof was with a flood*; there was a total devastation of them; which plainly shews the seventy weeks did also expire about that time, where-ever we fix the beginning of them; because the prophecy of Daniel tells us plainly, that towards the expiration of them, *the city and the sanctuary were to be destroyed;* which was fulfilled with a great deal of severity, as if there were some extraordinary cause of those fearful judgments which came upon them. And indeed we find, that after they had committed the great sin *of crucifying the Lord of life,* they gave up themselves to all manner of wickedness, *filling up the measure of their sins, that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost*; insomuch that Josephus tells us, "That he did verily "believe, that if the Romans had not come at that "time to destroy them, either the earth would have "swallowed up their city, or a flood have overwhelm-

" ed, or thunder and lightning, or fire from heaven, " would have consumed them, like Sodom and Gomor- " rah; for, says he, this generation was much more " wicked than they were."

And, which is a very considerable argument to the Jews, he came at the time when their whole nation were in expectation of the Messias; and indeed the whole world were about this time in expectation of a Prince out of Judea. That the Jews did expect the Messias about this time, appears by the famous saying of one of their greatest rabbies, Elias, that there should be 2000 years before the law, 2000 years the law should last, and 2000 years should be the time of the Messias: and according to the most exact chronology, it was much about the 4000th year of the world that Christ was born. That a great part of the world besides were at this time in expectation of a Prince to spring out of Judea, appears from those known testimonies of Suetonius and Tacitus. *Percrebuerat toto oriente vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judæa profecti rerum potirentur*, saith Suetonius; and Tacitus to the same purpose. Both agree in the words of this prophecy, which seem to be taken out of the prophecy of Micah, speaking of Bethlehem, in the land of Judea; *Out of thee shall come a Governor*. And Suetonius tells us farther, that the belief and expectation of this among the Jews was so great at that time, that this was the cause of their rebelling against the Romans. A just judgment of God upon them, that those who had rejected the true Messias should be deluded to their own ruin by the hopes of a false one.

2. All other circumstances of those promises and prophecies are exactly answered in the history and relation which the gospel gives of him. He was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, according to the first and very obscure promise made to our first parents, Gen. iii. 15. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:* I say, he was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, being, as our books of the gospel tell us, born of a pure virgin, which never knew man. He was the seed of Abraham, according to the second promise of him made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. *In thee shall all the families of the earth*

earth be blessed. He was a prophet like unto Moses, being a great worker of miracles above any of the prophets, as Moses also was; and by whom God gave a new law, as he did by Moses, according to the other famous promise of him, Deut. xviii. 15. *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me.*

He was of the tribe of Judah, and of the seed of David, as it was foretold the Messias should be; therefore he is called in the gospel, *the son of David;* and the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. vii. 14. appeals to the Jews concerning this, as a thing clear and acknowledged among them, *It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah;* which he would not have affirmed to the Jews without proof, if it had not been granted by them.

For the other, that he was the seed of David, the Jews will by no means admit as a thing at all evident from the history of the gospel concerning him: for, say they, if that appear any where, we should find it in his genealogy; but there we find no such matter: there indeed we have the genealogy of Joseph very differently related by the two evangelists, Matthew and Luke; but what is this to the genealogy of Christ, when the Christians themselves avowedly declare, that Joseph was not his father? It is granted that Joseph was of David's line; but to prove that Christ was really descended from David, instead of the genealogy of Joseph, they should have shewn Mary's.

This is a very malicious and spiteful objection, and the Jews insist very much upon it: but yet I think it is capable of a very satisfactory answer, in which I shall proceed by these steps.

1. We will grant that both the genealogies of our Saviour, that in Matthew and that in Luke, are intended to shew that Joseph was of Abraham's and David's line, and that neither of them are the genealogy of Mary. Some indeed have thought so, but it seems to me with very little probability: I incline much rather to Grotius's excellent conjecture about it, that Matthew's genealogy gives us an account of the succession of the royal family down as low as Joseph, and that in St Luke the direct series of Joseph's ancestors.

2. The Jews grant that it hath been an ancient tradition among Christians, that Joseph and Mary were of the same family, and that Mary was *virgo ἐπίκληρος*, one that had no brethren, an heiress, or co-heiress, and so according to the Jewish custom she was bound to marry in her family; which the Jews were especially careful of in the family of David, to preserve the succession of the royal line, of which the Messias was to come.

3. The Jews have nothing to object against this which shews it improbable.

4. If so, that they were of the same family, then the genealogy of Joseph, though not directly and expressly, yet by consequence was the genealogy of Mary; and consequently those genealogies in the gospel do sufficiently shew that Christ was the Son of David.

5. It cannot be imagined that the evangelists should have omitted the genealogy of Mary, if it had not been included in that of Joseph, especially St Matthew, who in his genealogy expressly tells us, that he intended to shew that he was *the Son of David*, and also denies Joseph to have been his real father.

6. If there had been any question, whether Mary was of the line of David, the Jews would certainly in that time have rejected him from being the Messias, upon that very account, nothing being more plausible for them to have said than this, that he pretended to have no father, and to be born of a virgin, who was not of the line of David, how could he then be the Messias, who was to be *of the seed of David?* But that he was always owned by the Jews to be of that seed, appears by the title so frequently given to him, of *the Son of David*.

It was prophesied that the *Messias should be born in Bethlehem of Judah*, Micah v. 2. which you find accordingly fulfilled, Matth. ii. 6. the providence of God so ordering it, that Augustus should then lay a general tax, which occasion brought up Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem; not only that she might be delivered there, but that their names being there entered, their family might be ascertained, and there might no doubt afterward arise, but that they were *of the line of David*.

It

It was foretold he should be *born of a virgin*, Is. vii. 14. which you see accordingly fulfilled, Matth. i. That this is not the primary, but the mystical sense of that place in Isaiah, I think may without prejudice be granted to the Jews, who, in innumerable places of the Old Testament, do, besides the first and literal sense, allow of a mystical one; and if it be objected that this is only the saying of us Christians, that Christ was born of a pure virgin; to them it is easily answered, that if this be foretold of the Messias, whoever he be, that he shall be born of a virgin, as the Jews generally grant, we have as much assurance of this, as they can have, or imagine to have of theirs, whenever he should come. For it is not any report or tradition that can give credit to so strange a thing, but the unquestionable miracles which he wrought, which prove him to come from God, and consequently to be no impostor, but to be all that he pretended he was.

It was foretold of him, that he should be *a great prophet and teacher*, Deut. xviii. 15. *A prophet will the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me.* Is. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor*, &c. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. *And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.* And chap. xxxvii. ver. 24. *And David my servant shall be King over them, and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.* And this was eminently fulfilled in that he foretold several future contingents; as his own crucifixion, Peter's denial of him, the destruction of Jerusalem, the rising of false Christs, and false prophets, (which I shall particularly consider hereafter), the descending of the Holy Ghost, and the admirable success of the gospel in the world; in that he preached so pure and perfect a doctrine to the world, and with so much authority; a doctrine so excellent and reasonable, so suitable to the necessities, and agreeable to the reason of mankind; a doctrine which tendeth so much to the perfecting of human nature, and to the peace and happiness of human society, above any other institution in the world.

It was foretold that he ſhould do many and great miracles, and ſuch as ſhould be beneficial to men, Iſ. xxxv. 5. 6. *Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped. Then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſing.* And was not all this eminently accompliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt? What greater, or more public, or more frequent and numerous, or more beneficial miracles, can almoſt be imagined, than Chriſt did? So that we may ſay to the Jews, as ſome of them did to the Phariſees in our Saviour's time, You talk of a Meſſias to come; *yet when he is come, will he do greater works than this man hath done?*

It was foretold of him, that the people ſhould receive him with joy and triumph when *he came riding upon an aſs to Jeruſalem*, Zech. ix. 9. which we find fulfilled, Matth. xxi.

It was propheſied that he ſhould *ſuffer many things, and be rejected, and deſpiſed of men.* Pſal. xxii. 6. *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and deſpiſed of the people.* Iſ. liii. 3. *He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not.* Which we find fulfilled all along in the hiſtory of the goſpel.

It was propheſied that he ſhould be *ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver*, Zech. xi. 12. which we find fulfilled, Matth. xxvii. 9. That when he who was *the ſhepherd was ſmitten, the ſheep ſhould be ſcattered*, Zech. xiii. 7. which was accompliſhed, Matth. xxvii. 56. *All the diſciples forſook him and fled.* That he ſhould be *ſcourged, and buffeted, and ſpit upon.* Iſ. l. 6. *I gave my back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from ſhame and ſpitting;* which you find punctually accompliſhed, Matth. xxvii.

It was foretold that he ſhould die a violent death, Iſ. liii. 8. *He was cut off out of the land of the living.* Dan. ix. 26. *Meſſias the Prince ſhall be cut off.* That he ſhould undergo all theſe ſufferings with the greateſt patience, Iſ. liii. 7. *He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter; and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is*

is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. That he should suffer all these things, *not for himself, but for sinners,* Is. liii. 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* And ver. 6. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And ver. 8. *For the transgression of my people was he stricken.* And ver. 10. *His soul was made an offering for sin.* And ver. 12. *He bare the sins of many.* And Dan. ix. 26. it is said, the *Messias should be cut off, but not for himself.*

It was foretold, that *his hands and feet should be pierced,* Psal. xxii. 16. he should be *numbered with the transgressors,* Is. liii. 12. And accordingly he was condemned as a malefactor, to suffer with malefactors, being crucified *between two thieves.*

It was foretold that he should have *gall and vinegar given him to drink,* Psal. lxix. 22.; that he should be derided in the midst of his sufferings, Psal. xxii. 7. 8. *All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* And this was most punctually accomplished, Matth. xxvii. 39. 43. *And they that passed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him.*

It was foretold that he should cry out under his sufferings, Psal. xxii. 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* That he should pray for his wicked persecutors, Is. liii. 12. that *he made intercession for the transgressors:* and so he did most affectionately, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* That they should *cast lots for his garments,* Psal. xxii. 18. All, or most of which predictions were by the ancient Jews understood of the Messias, and were exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as appears fully out of the history of the gospel.

And then for the circumstances of his burial; it was foretold, that he should *make his grave with the rich,*

Is.

Is. liii. 9. which was accomplished in that he was put into Joseph of Arimathea's own tomb.

His resurrection was foretold, to be *after three days*, Hos. vi. 24. as several of the rabbins understood that place; however, that he should rise again, may be plainly argued from those texts, where it is said, that *his kingdom shall have no end;* and Is. liii. 10. where it is said, that, after his death, *he shall see his seed, and prolong his days; and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* But most expressly, Psal. xvi. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption.*

And his *sitting at the right hand of God*, which supposeth his ascension into heaven, Psal. cx. 1. *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

The wonderful success of the gospel, and the universal spreading of it through the world, was foretold, Gen. xii. 2. *In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; which implies, that the blessing of the gospel, which the Messias brought to the world, should be universally diffused, Gen. xlix. 10. *To him shall the gathering of the people be.* Psal. ii. 8. God promiseth there, *to give Christ the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* Besides several other places of the psalms and prophets, too many to be reckoned up.

Now, the accomplishment of all these prophecies happened in their days who saw our Saviour, and conversed with him; so that they were capable of receiving full satisfaction concerning his divine authority, and that he was a person sent of God to teach the world, and assure them that he was the Messias, foretold and propheſied of in the books of the Old Testament, which being by them received as of divine inspiration, did consequently assure them that he was from God.

II. The second way thereby we may be satisfied concerning the divine authority of a person, is by the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven: and this testimony Christ had twice given to him: the first publicly before a great assembly of people at John's baptism, which was just before he began his public ministry. Matth. iii. 16. 17. *The Holy Ghost descended upon*

upon him like a dove, as he came out of the water; and there was a voice from heaven, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The same voice was heard by Peter, James, and John, at his transfiguration on the mount, as you may see, Luke ix. 35. And this St Peter mentions, as a considerable argument of Christ's divine authority, 2 Pet. i. 16. 17. 18. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from the God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

Indeed he makes this testimony to be such an argument, as, concurring with that which I mentioned before, is sufficient to persuade one that Christ was sent from God; but he does not make it to be equal to that, which he adds at the 19th verse, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*, &c. intimating the prophecies of the Old Testament were greater confirmation than this single testimony of a voice from heaven does amount to.

III. I proceed to the next evidence, which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, *viz.* the power of working miracles, which he was endowed withal; and this is the highest testimony that can be given to any person that he is sent from God. And in this respect chiefly is the gospel called *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, because of those glorious miracles whereby the gospel was confirmed. This is, as it were, the broad seal of heaven which is sufficient to give confirmation to any doctrine which does not evidently contradict the perfections of the divine nature: and it is not credible, that the providence of God is so little tender of the concernments of mankind, as to communicate this power to any person that will abuse it to the confirmation of a lie. I deny not but the devil may do many strange things, and such as we cannot

cannot distinguish from some sort of miracles *; and where men, by some great precedent provocation, have made it just for God *to give them up to strong delusions to believe lies, because they would not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness;* there God may permit the devil to work strange wonders, as it is foretold, 2 Thess. ii. 9. that the coming of *Antichrist shall be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceiveableness of unrighteousness.* But in this case there will remain two ways, whereby impartial and considerate men, and such as are not blinded by prejudice or their lusts, may sufficiently discover, that this is not from God.

1. By the absurdity of the doctrine which those wonders are brought to confirm: and such were the lewd, and filthy, and senseless doctrines of the Gnostics, to which Simon Magus pretended to give a confirmation by the wonders that he wrought, and this very probably may be that which the Apostle refers to in this chapter. And such likewise are several of the doctrines of Popery: such as the adoration of the virgin Mary, of saints and images, and the doctrine of transubstantiation; for the confirmation of which, they pretend a great many wonders have been wrought.

2. By the contrariety of the doctrine to that which hath had the confirmation of far greater miracles. Therefore if we should grant to the Papists, that several of those miracles which they brag of, were really wrought, (which considering the infinite cheats and impostures which have been practised by them in that kind, and have been discovered, we have no reason to grant); yet because the doctrine, which they pretend to confirm, is absurd, and unreasonable, and contrary to the doctrine which they themselves own to have had a far greater confirmation, by miracles far greater, and more unquestionable, more publicly done, and in such a manner, and with such circumstances, as do free them from all suspicion of imposture; I say, for this reason we cannot admit those doctrines to be of divine authority; because the confirmation which is given to them by those wonders, is overpowered by a great-

* Of this see more, ser. 229. 230. 231. in this volume.

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er and more divine testimony; as the magicians of Pharaoh, though they did many odd feats, yet were plainly mastered and conquered by the greater miracles which Moses wrought.

The sum is this, that where-ever any person is endowed with an eminent power of working miracles, such as are of the first rank, great and unquestionable, and many, and publicly wrought, that is one of the highest evidences we can have of the divine authority of any person or doctrine. Therefore Nicodemus does upon this ground very reasonably conclude, that our Saviour was sent from God, John iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And our Saviour himself insists upon this frequently as the great proof of his divine authority, Matth. xi. 3. 4. When John Baptist sent two of his disciples to him, to be satisfied, whether he was the Messias, he bids them report to John what the doctrine was which they heard him preach, and what miracles they saw him work for the confirmation of it: *Go and shew John those things which ye do see and hear; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.* John v. 33. 36. our Saviour there tells the Jews, that *John bare witness of him;* and that might satisfy them, because they looked upon John as a prophet: but, saith he, *I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* John xv. 24. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.* This was the great aggravation of their unbelief, that they resisted the evidence of so great miracles, such as no man in the world ever wrought *.

I should now briefly run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the history of the gospel; and shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. But this I reserve for my next discourse.

* See more of this, ser. 222. in this volume.

SER-

SERMON CCXXXVI.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The third sermon on this text.

IN my last discourse, I was considering the third evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, *viz.* the power of working miracles, with which he was endowed. And in treating on this, I proposed briefly to run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the gospel, and to shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. And that I may proceed in some kind of order and method, I shall reduce the miracles that concern our Saviour to these three heads.

First, The miracles of his life.

Secondly, Those that were wrought at his death.

Thirdly, The great miracles of his resurrection from the dead, and those two that were consequent upon it, his ascension into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and Christians in miraculous gifts and powers.

I begin with the first, the miracles of his life. And in speaking of these, I shall shew that they had all the advantageous circumstances to convince men of the reality of them, and to free them from all suspicion of imposture.

poſture. They were many; they were great, and unqueſtionable miracles; they were frequently wrought, and for a long time together; publicly, and in the preſence of multitudes; and they were beneficial, and for the good of men.

1. They were many. There might be ſomething of impoſture ſuſpected in a few inſtances, that might be choſen out for the purpoſe. But our Saviour gave inſtances of his divine power in ſeveral kinds, ſo that there is ſcarce any thing that is miraculous can be inſtanced in, wherein he did not ſhew his power. He healed all manner of diſeaſes, and that in multitudes of people, as they came accidentally without any diſcrimination, Matth. iv. 23. 24. And though moſt of his miracles were healing, yet he gave inſtances in other kinds; as in turning of water into wine; commanding down the ſtorm; and walking upon the waters, *&c.* And though the hiſtory of the goſpel mentions very many miracles that he wrought, yet St John tells us, that thoſe that are recorded, are but very few in compariſon of what he did, John xx. 30. *And many other ſigns truly did Jeſus in the preſence of his diſciples, which are not written in this book.* And chap. xxi. 35. *And there are alſo many other things which Jeſus did, the which if they ſhould be written every one, I ſuppoſe that even the world itſelf could not contain the books that ſhould be written.* An hyperbolical expreſſion, to ſignify the great number of his miracles and actions, beſides what are recorded by the evangeliſts.

2. As they were many, ſo they were great and unqueſtionable, both as to the manner of doing them, and as to the things that he did.

(1.) Many things which were not miraculous in themſelves, yet were ſo as to the manner of doing them, which was not by any magical words, and figures, and charms, and ſuperſtitious rites, according to the manner of thoſe who pretended to work miracles among the Heathens. It is true, he healed many diſeaſes which were curable by phyſic and art; yet then the manner was ſuch as was above the ordinary courſe of nature; many he cured by a word only, or by a touch, and the cure was wrought immediately, and

in the same instant when he spake the word, though they were at a great distance. Many were cured without his taking any notice of them, by touching the very hem of his garment; of all which I might give several instances, but that they are so well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the gospel. Sometimes indeed he performed the cure by degrees; as in the man that was restored to sight, and saw men at first confusedly, and without any distinction, as if they had been trees, Mark viii. 24. Sometimes he used some kind of means, but such as were very disproportionable in their nature to the effect that was produced; as in the case of the deaf man, which he cured by putting his finger into his ear, and by his spittle, Mark vii. 33.; and the blind man whose eyes he anointed with clay mixed with spittle, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, John ix. 6. 7. But most of his miracles he wrought in an instant, and merely by his word.

(2.) As to the things he did, many of them were miraculous in themselves. He cured many inveterate diseases, as Matth. ix. 20. A woman that had an issue of blood twelve years. He made the woman straight by touching her, that had been crooked, and bowed together eighteen years, Luke xiii. 13. and the man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years, only by bidding him take up his bed and walk, John v. 8. He cured the man that was born blind, John ix. and, which all men will grant to be miraculous, and to have exceeded all the power of nature that we know of, he raised several from the dead; and because it might be said that several of those were not really dead, but in a delirium or swoon, there is one instance beyond all exception, John xi. he raised up Lazarus to life, after he had been four days in the grave.

(3.) He wrought his miracles frequently, upon all occasions that were offered, and for a long time together, during the whole time of his public ministry, which is generally computed to have been three years and a half; a time sufficient to have detected any imposture in; especially one that shewed himself so openly, and conversed indifferently with all sorts of persons with so little guard and caution.

(4.) He

(4.) He did all his miracles publicly, not in corners and among some select company of people, but before multitudes, and in the greatest places of concourse; so that if there had been any thing of imposture in them, he gave the fairest opportunity that could be to his enemies to have detected him. Mahomet's miracles were wrought by himself alone, without witness; which was the best way in the world certainly for one that could work no miracles, but yet could persuade the people what he pleased: but our Saviour did nothing in private. His transfiguration only was before three of his disciples; and therefore he made no use of that as an argument to the Jews, but charged his disciples to tell it to none, till after his resurrection, because that would give credit to it; after they were assured of that, they would easily believe his transfiguration: but all his other miracles were in the sight of the people. He healed publicly, and admitted all to see what he did. When he turned the water into wine, it was at a public feast; when he multiplied the loaves, and the fishes, it was in the sight of four or five thousand people; when he raised Lazarus from the dead, it was before a great multitude of the people. The works that he did durst abide the light, and the more they were manifested, the more miraculous they did appear.

(5.) His miracles were generally beneficial, and for the good of men; so that they had these two characters of divinity stamped upon them, that they were effects both of power and goodness. Most of his miracles were such as tended to the benefit of mankind; most of them were either healing, or feeding miracles; or refreshing, as turning the water into wine; or tending to the peace of human society, as the miracle that he wrought, rather than he would give offence by not paying tribute. It is true indeed he might have shewn his power every way; he gave some instances of it in other kinds, which might seem more for his purpose, and for the manifestation of his power, as in his allaying the storm, and walking upon the water: but he wrought no miracles that were destructive, except only two, namely, his permitting the devil to enter into the

ſwine, Matth. viii. 28. whereby the inhabitants of the place ſuſtained a great loſs. But our Saviour did this upon very good reaſon, as a reproof of that ſordid temper which he ſaw to be in them; they were ſo immerſed in the world, and wedded to their intereſts, that they would, rather than loſe any thing in that kind, forfeit all the bleſſings that the Meſſias brought with him; and this temper appeared afterward in them; for though they were convinced that he had wrought a miracle, yet becauſe they had ſuſtained ſome prejudice, *they deſired him to depart out of their coaſts.*

The other exception is his curſing the fig-tree, Matth. xxi. 19. which had a moral ſignification to his diſciples, and was a ſharp warning to them, what they muſt look for if they were unfruitful. Our Saviour rebukes our ſloth and barrenneſs in the fig-tree.

Secondly, Next to the miracles of our Saviour's life, I mentioned thoſe that were wrought at his death, which though they were not wrought by him, yet they were wrought to give teſtimony to him, that he was ſome extraordinary perſon; for as much as when he died, the frame of nature was put into ſuch a trembling and melancholy poſture. So the hiſtory of the goſpel tells us, Matth. xxvii. 45. that *from the ſixth hour till the ninth, there was darkneſs over all the land*; which, as learned men have calculated, could not be an eclipſe, according to the natural courſe of things. And ver. 51. 52. *&c. The veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.*

Thirdly, The great miracle which was wrought after his death, in raiſing him up from the dead, together with thoſe two that were conſequent upon it; his viſible aſcending into heaven, and his ſending the Holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles, and primitive Chriſtians, in ſuch miraculous gifts and powers.

Firſt, The great miracle of his reſurrection, after he had lain three days in the grave. This was the miracle which was to be the chief atteſtation of his divine authority, and to give confirmation to the doctrine which he declared to the world. And accordingly we find that the

the chief office of the apostles was to be witnesses of his resurrection; and the great evidence they were to give to the world of his divine authority was, *that God raised him from the dead.* And we find the scripture every where laying the great stress of his divine authority upon this miracle. Acts xvii. 31. *By that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Rom. i. 4. *Declared mightily to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead.* 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.*

Now, that this miracle was really wrought, I shall endeavour to shew, by producing such evidence for it, as the nature of the thing to be proved, which is matter of fact, will bear. I shall therefore,

First, Produce such testimony as we have for it.

Secondly, Add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to the testimony,

First, For the testimony we have of this. In short, we have it attested by an abundantly sufficient number of eye-witnesses; and greater evidence than this, matter of fact is not capable of. For the eye-witnesses and the number of them, you have them produced by St Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5. 6. 7. 8. The sum of what he saith is this: That Christ, after his resurrection, was seen once by Peter alone, once by James alone, and twice by all the apostles together, and by above five hundred brethren at once. So that the number of the eye-witnesses is abundantly sufficient. And that they did attest this, appears by the history of the gospel, which hath descended down to us by uncontrolled tradition. And in this case we require no more credit to be given to the gospel, than to any other history, or narrative of matter of fact; which whosoever doth deny, takes away the faith of history, and makes it impossible to prove the truth of any thing that is past *.

Secondly, I shall add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to this testimony; partly relating to the persons that give this testimony, and partly to the matter or thing which they attest.

* Of this see more, ser. 193.

1*ſt*, In reference to the perſons that give this teſtimony, we may conſider them with theſe three advantages.

1. That they are credible perſons.

2. That they agree in their teſtimony.

3. That the greateſt ſufferings could not make them to conceal it or deny it.

1. For the credibility of the perſons. Two things render a witneſs ſuſpected, want of knowledge, or of integrity; if either he do not ſufficiently know the thing which he atteſts; or there be a reaſon to ſuſpect his fidelity in relating the thing. Now, the witneſſes in this caſe of the reſurrection cannot be queſtioned for either of theſe; not for want of knowledge, becauſe they were eye-witneſſes, as I ſaid before; nor for want of faithfulneſs. There are two things which ordinarily make us ſuſpect the fidelity of a witneſs; if there be either an appearance of deceit in the manner of the relation, or of deſign in the end of it: but the witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection are free from both theſe grounds of jealouſy.

(1.) There is no appearance of deceit in the manner of their relating it. We ſuſpect a relation that is either too general, or too artificial; but the report of theſe witneſſes cannot be charged with either of theſe. For,

1*ſt*, They report the thing with all its circumſtances of time and place; when he roſe, what were the circumſtances of it, where he was ſeen, and by whom, how often he appeared, what he did and ſaid.

2*dly*, They uſe no art or inſinuation in the manner of delivering, but report it with the greateſt plainneſs, and nakedneſs, and ſimplicity that can be imagined; without any ambiguity, or obſcurity, or flouriſh of language, as becomes an honeſt relator, who uſeth no arts, becauſe he is not guilty to himſelf of any deſign to deceive.

(2.) Nor is there any appearance of deſign as to the end of their teſtimony. What deſign could they have, who did knowingly renounce all ſecular advantages of honour, and riches, and reputation, and forego all worldly contentment, and expoſe themſelves to continual

nual hazards and sufferings? They got nothing by bearing this testimony, but what every man that hath worldly designs doth most solicitously avoid.

2. They concur and agree in their testimony. They constantly delivered the same testimony, with all its circumstances, both in word and writing, several persons in several places, without varying or disagreeing in the least material circumstance.

3. The greatest sufferings could not make them either deny it, or conceal it; which is a great argument of their integrity. If the thing they attested had been false, it had been an unparallelled madness for any one to persist in it to the loss of life; and incredible that so many should conspire in the same unreasonable and unaccountable folly; especially when the religion which they professed did exclude all liars from all the happiness and rewards of the next life, which they pretended to be persuaded of; so that whatsoever those persons might be otherwise, and however they might falsify in other things, there is no reason to doubt of their truth and fidelity in this report, because they died for the testimony of it. Therefore the highest attestation of a thing is called martyrdom, and the most credible witnesses, martyrs. And though bare martyrdom be not an argument of the infallible truth of a testimony, or of the infallibility of the person that gives it; yet it is one of the highest arguments that can be of his honesty and integrity in that thing, and that he believes himself; otherwise he would not die for it: and it is a good evidence of the general integrity of these persons, as to all other things, that they were so conscientious, as not, for fear of death, to deny that which they believed to be a truth; nor to conceal that which they believed to be of importance.

2*dly*, As to the matter or thing which they attested, we may consider it with these advantages.

1. The resurrection of Christ was such a thing, as in its own nature they were capable of giving evidence to.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of it, which add much to the credit of it.

3. We

3. We will consider the effects that this relation and report had in the world.

4. The circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it.

1. Let us consider that the resurrection of Christ is such a thing, as in the nature of it they were capable of giving testimony to. Indeed, if it were such a thing as either in the nature of it were absolutely impossible, as if a man should say he had seen or handled a pure spirit; or else such, as these persons could not reasonably be presumed to be competent witnesses of it, as if a man that is altogether ignorant in geometry should say, that he had seen such a man demonstrate a proposition in Euclid; in these cases, though a man be never so credible, yet he is not to be credited. But the resurrection of Christ is no such thing; no man that believes that God can make a living body out of nothing, can think it absolutely impossible to raise a dead body to life; nor was it a thing they could not be presumed to be competent witnesses of: for that which they attest concerning the resurrection of Christ, is that which every man may give evidence in, for it requires nothing but common sense and understanding; as to touch and handle a body, and know that it is a body; to see a man perform the operations of life, to see him walk, and eat, and hear him speak: and this they attest of Christ, after he was crucified, dead, and buried; that they saw him several times, and conversed with him; and they could not be mistaken in the person, being so intimately and familiarly acquainted with him in his life-time.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of his resurrection. He had foretold in his life-time, that he would rise again the third day. The chief priests and the Pharisees remembered this saying, and therefore lest his disciples should come by night and steal him away, they make the sepulchre sure, seal the stone, and set a guard of soldiers. The disciples whom they were afraid of, they were scattered with fear; and that it might appear that it was the work of God, there was a great earthquake which made the guard to tremble; and in their

their sight an angel appearing in a most glorious manner rolled away the stone; and when he was risen and appeared to his disciples, they were terrified, and thought it had been a spirit, till our Saviour bids them *see him, and handle him, that he had flesh and bones, which a spirit could not have.* He conversed familiarly with them; and, for their greater satisfaction, did eat with them; and, to satisfy the scrupulous unbelief of Thomas, he bids him put his hand into the hole of his side, and see in his hands the print of the nails, to shew that it was the same body that was crucified. Now, the greater their jealousy and unbelief was, the greater is the evidence of the thing; and it shews that it was upon great conviction; and when they could no longer resist the evidence of the thing, that they did believe it: and after all this, they saw him ascend up into heaven, and found the promise of the Spirit made good to them, to furnish them with power and gifts, for carrying on the work of the gospel.

3. We will consider the strange and wonderful effects that this report and relation had in the world. The preaching of Christ crucified, and rising from the dead, had a strange operation upon the world. With such admirable success did this prevail, that in a few years the gospel was entertained in a great part of the world. The plain and naked relation of this, by men that were destitute of secular learning and arts, without the help of power, or policy, or any other worldly advantage, did prevail with men to entertain and embrace that profession, against the prejudice of education, the bias of corrupt nature, and the advantages of worldly interests: nor could all the opposition of the great and the wise, the princes and the philosophers of the world, give a check to the prevalency of it. Surely nothing but truth could have wrought those great wonders and effects, naked and unarmed. Those strange and miraculous effects which are matter of fact, and undeniable, one would think, should render it very easy to any man to believe the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

4. We will consider the circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it. Many of them were

were very rational, and ſerious, and inquiſitive perſons, who had opportunity to ſatisfy themſelves about the truth of it; and if there had been any reaſon to diſbelieve the teſtimony that was given, had ſuch great and generous ſpirits, that if it had been for their advantage and intereſt to have believed it, yet out of the greatneſs of their minds they would not have entertained any ungrounded relation, much leſs a religion built upon it. Such were ſome eminent among the Jews and Heathens for their great learning, and knowledge of philoſophy, and all excellent endowments, who were early converted to Chriſtianity. And as for the multitude who embraced the goſpel, the doctrine of it was ſo contrary to their luſts, and the profeſſion of it to their intereſts, that nothing can be imagined to have perſuaded them to the belief of it, but a high ſatisfaction of the truth of it; and particularly of this great miracle of Chriſt's reſurrection, upon which principally the goſpel doth rely. And thus I have endeavoured to give you the beſt evidence I could of the truth of this miracle.

I ſhould now proceed to take notice of the objections that may be made againſt it: but this I ſhall reſerve to the following diſcourſe.

The end of the Ninth Volume.